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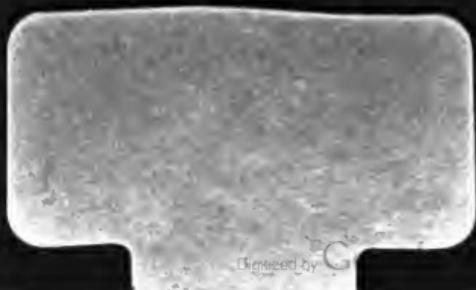
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**Meditations on  
the eucharist,  
tr. [by R.H.N.  
Browne].**

François Alexandre  
M.R. de La  
Bouillerie (abp. ...)



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## **R**editations on the **E**ucharist.







# Meditations *On the Eucharist.*

BY  
MONSGR. DE LA BOUILLERIE,  
BISHOP OF CARCASSONNE.

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(Translated, by permission, from the French Thirty-third Edition.)

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"Non posuistis una hora vigilare Mecum?"  
"Could ye not watch with Me one hour?"

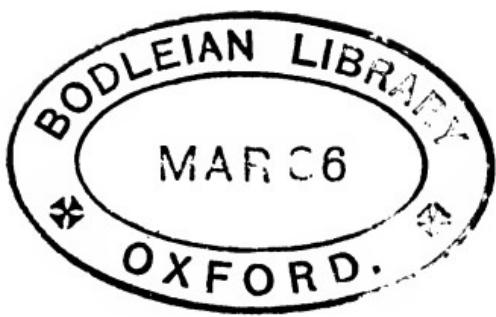
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## P R E F A C E.

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THE Meditations of Monsgr. de la BOUILLERIE having already reached the thirty-third edition, would seem to merit to be known beyond the limits of the country in whose language they are written.

They are addressed, as the Author remarks, to all pious souls, to all who have tasted how sweet the Lord is in the Sacrament of the Altar ; "and all who love the Eucharist," he adds, "will, I am sure, love this book ; for they will find there the same thoughts with which God has doubtless often inspired them even as well or better than He has myself. I am far," he concludes, "from having succeeded in this work as well as I could wish. To express better the unspeakable sweetness of this Mystery I would that my tongue were more like that of the great

and holy Saint Bernard, whose eloquence the Church has compared to honey. But I shall esteem myself happy if these Meditations become the motive for any acts of Love towards the Most Holy Sacrament, and, like the dim lamps that hang before the Sanctuary, are found just bright enough to guide our steps to the Altar, without lessening the charm of Its mysterious darkness."

There is little in these Meditations that grates at all harshly upon a truly Catholic ear; and with some slight exceptions it has been thought best to preserve unaltered the few expressions that are out of harmony with the present practice of the Catholic Church in England. The Translator is fully aware that his version falls far short of the beauty of the original; but having done his best, he hopes that his labour may not have been altogether in vain.

R. H. N. B.

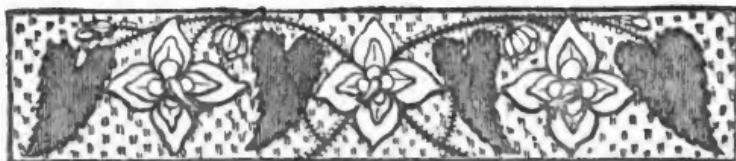
LAUS DEO.

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## The Sleep of the Eucharist.

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“Ego dormio, et cor meum vigilat.”

“I sleep, but my heart waketh.”

*Cant. v. 2.*

---



LET us listen to the Spouse of the Holy Canticles, as He addresses us in these sweet words, and try to understand them aright : “ I sleep,” He says, “ but My heart waketh,— *Ego dormio, et cor meum vigilat.* ” Ah ! if He had stopped at that one word, “ I sleep,” far from tasting the sweetness I am in search of, I should find only alarm and disquietude. Jesus Christ sleeps ; and Satan my enemy waketh, and goeth about like a lion to devour me. Jesus Christ sleeps ; and my senses, ever wakeful, are watching to enslave my soul. Jesus Christ sleeps ; who shall wake for me ? My love sleeps ; on whom shall I count ? My strength sleeps ; who will support me ? My hope sleeps ; in whom shall I hope ? . . . But He Who is at once my

Love, my Hope, and my Strength, leaves me not long in suspense. "I sleep," He says, "but My heart waketh"; and then am I at once reassured. His is no heavy sleep Whose heart waketh; no sleep of forgetfulness Whose heart slumbereth not. If His heart waketh He will love me still; if His heart waketh He will yet come to help me. His heart will ever find secret words to instruct me, secret delights to charm me. What matters it, then, that all else sleeps in Him provided that His heart waketh? Jesus Christ is all heart.

Sleep, Lord Jesus; I am comforted; Thy heart waketh.

## II.

But now let us try to penetrate the mystery of this two-fold language; and since the Spouse of the Canticles here reveals to us two things, first that He sleeps, and secondly that His heart waketh, let us see how it is that He sleeps while His heart is not asleep.

Ah! when I meditate attentively upon Jesus Christ,—His eternal existence in the bosom of His Father,—His birth amongst us,—His life,—His death,—but above all, His divine Eucharist,—these words ever recur to my thoughts,—"I sleep, but My heart waketh,"—and they explain Jesus Christ to me wholly.

Let us contemplate the Divine Word hidden

in the bosom of His Father before the creation of the world. There He dwelleth from all eternity ; and what doeth He ? Let us not say that He sleeps an eternal sleep ! At least it seems like sleep, as far as concerns the world not yet created and mankind not yet in existence. It is not until later that He will go forth from the deep recesses of the Heavens as a Bridegroom out of His chamber, Ps. xix. 5. and spanning the space that separates us from Him, will in His goodness Luke i. 28. "visit us." But at first, and as long as He dwelleth in the bosom of His Father, it is for His Father alone, and for the Holy Spirit that unites them, that He seems to live. For us He remains inactive ; for us He sleeps from eternity.

Nay ; let us take care how we speak thus ; such words would be blasphemy. "When I was sleeping in the bosom of My Father," the Eternal Word replies, "My heart was already awake for you; *Ego dormio, et cor meum vigilat.*" His heart was awake for us ; and has He not taken care to teach us this by the mouth of His prophet ? "I have loved thee with an everlasting love." What is this but to say, Jer. xxxi. 3. "From all eternity My heart waketh for you and on your behalf" ?

Yes ; from all eternity He had adopted us as His children ; from all eternity He had numbered all our steps, and had elected the angel who

should be near us to ward off from our feet the perils of the way. Yes ; from all eternity He knew our miseries, and had appointed the voice and the heart that should relieve them. Yes ; from all eternity He knew our faults, and had selected the Priest who should extend His hands over our heads to pardon us. Ah ! has He not, then, been able to say to us from all eternity, “I sleep, but my heart waketh,—*Ego dormio, et cor meum vigilat*” ?

When the fulness of time was come the Divine Word became Incarnate and came and dwelt amongst us. He is born in a poor stable. Behold Him, an infant asleep upon His mother’s breast ! Scarcely a movement makes known that He is alive, scarce a sigh or a tear. His eyes, instead of opening themselves upon me, seem firmly closed ; His arms, instead of being stretched out towards me, are hanging round His mother’s neck ; His feet, instead of walking towards me, are wrapped in swaddling clothes. Ah, what ! I say to myself ; He is come to save Israel, and He sleeps !

“I sleep,” replies the Babe ; “but fear not, My heart waketh,—*Ego dormio, et cor meum vigilat.*”

His heart waketh. Oh ! yes ; already what love is there in this little Infant ! what love in this humiliation ! what love in this Mother, who will become also ours ! what love in this cradle, in this first sigh, this first tear ! Already His waking

heart has called near to Him rich and poor, great and small. The angelic voice which summons the shepherds is His heart, which waketh and saith unto them, "Peace to men of goodwill."

The star that guides the Wise Men is His heart, that waketh and guideth them.

Jesus Christ passes the first thirty years of His life in the solitude of Nazareth ; there, concealed from all eyes, forgotten of men, buried in a profound humiliation, you would think that this hidden and obscure life was a sleep. "I seem to you to be asleep," says He again, "but see how My heart waketh. I know that obedience is repugnant to your nature, mildness and humility to your spiritual pride. It is not too much for My heart to give you for thirty years an example of these sublime virtues. I sleep not so profoundly that My heart waketh not to say unto you, 'Learn of Me, for I am meek and lowly of heart.'"<sup>Matt. xi. 29.</sup>

The whole life of Jesus will, everywhere, as we pass through it, show us the realization of the words upon which we are meditating, "I sleep, but My heart waketh."

One day He embarks with His Apostles upon the Lake of Gennesaret; a storm arises, and the waves cover the boat. "As for Him," says the Evangelist, "He was asleep."<sup>Matt. viii. 24.</sup> The terrified Apostles surround Him and awaken Him. They say unto Him, "Lord, save us, we perish"; and Jesus replies, "Why are ye

fearful, oh ye of little faith?" As if He had said unto them, "I was sleeping, it is true ; but My heart was awake for you,—*Ego dormio, et cor meum vigilat.*" "Then He arose, and rebuked the winds and the sea, and there was a great calm."

And lastly, when the Saviour of the world was lifted up upon the Cross of Calvary to accomplish the will of His Father and the work of our redemption ; when stretching out His arms towards us, and bending forward His head crowned with thorns, He gave up the ghost, seems He not to say unto us for the last time, "I sleep, but My heart waketh,—*Ego dormio, et cor meum vigilat* ; I die upon the Cross, but this death is a sleep that reaches not to My heart ; I quit this mortal life, but My fatherly heart will not leave you orphans ; I close My eyes to this terrestrial light, but My heart watches you and contemplates you with love. All My bones are out of joint ; My limbs are pierced ; a spear enters My heart ; but from this opened heart, ever waking, flow forth for you two fertile streams,—the water and the blood,—Baptism and the Eucharist"?

### III.

The Eucharist ! This it is which is the chief subject of our meditations ; this is the beloved aim of all our thoughts. I can explain the whole life of Jesus Christ in these simple and comforting words, "I sleep, but my heart waketh,"

because they seem to me to be, beyond all other words, the loving motto of the Eucharist. Let us approach the Tabernacle and the Altar ; let us contemplate Jesus Christ under the Eucharistic veil. What annihilation ! What darkness ! What uninterrupted silence ! What a profound sleep ! "But be not deceived," saith He. "The more I annihilate Myself, the more I love you ; the more I keep silence, the more I hear you speaking to Me ; the more I hide Myself under veils, the more do I make Myself known unto you ; the more I seem to be asleep, the more wakeful I am ; I sleep, but My heart waketh,—*Ego dormio, et cor meum vigilat.*"

Oh men ! whosoever ye be, and whatsoever be your miseries or your troubles, your faithlessness or your sins, at the Altar and at the Eucharist be comforted, be consoled, be reassured. In the Tabernacle Jesus Christ sleeps, in order that so humble a sleep may remove the terror with which His Majestic Presence would alarm you ; but in the Tabernacle the heart of Jesus Christ waketh, in order that this wakefulness may reassure you. The Eucharist is a sleep. But, oh weak and miserable sinners, fear not ; the Eucharist is the heart of a God Who slumbereth not. Feeble souls, here is your strength ; afflicted souls, here your joy ; miserable sinners, here is your salvation.

## IV.

Thus the heart of Jesus Christ takes neither rest nor sleep. His love excites it ever into action. He watches incessantly over our dearest interests. He watches over our spirit to illuminate it, over our heart to kindle in it the fire of His pure love, over our senses to calm them, over our thoughts to direct them, over our least actions to ennable them, over our life to deify it. How comforting, and yet how profitable a lesson is here for us! Between my heart and that of Jesus Christ there is this difference: when Jesus Christ seems to sleep His heart waketh; but I sleep, and my heart is not awake. I sleep in forgetfulness of my duties: I sleep in luke-warmness and indifference; and this sleep is that of the heart. My senses are always awake; my passions are always active; my spirit is often restless and unquiet; but it is my heart that sleepeth. Would that it were not so! that, rather, all else might sleep in me except my heart; for it is that which Thou chiefly re-

gardest, O my God, *Dominus,*  
*intuetur cor.*

Dust and ashes as I am, knowing by sad experience my imperfections and my miseries, I shall not be surprised if sometimes I sleep; but at least grant unto me, O Lord, to love Thee fervently, to love Thee mightily, in order that, being full of trust in Thy goodness, I also

may say unto Thee, “I sleep, but my heart waketh,—*Ego dormio, et cor meum vigilat.*”

Grant me, O Lord, thus to pass my life, in loving Thee with all my heart, in adoring Thee with all my heart, in serving Thee with all my heart ; so that when Thou shalt call me to Thyself, and I am breathing out my last breath, my last words may be these,—“I go now to sleep the sleep of death ; but I will not sleep altogether—my heart waketh. It will awake near Thee, and in Thee remain awake throughout a blessed eternity.”





## The Divine Field of the Eucharist.

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"Audi, filia, ne vadas in alterum agrum ad colligendum."  
"Hearest thou not, my daughter? Go not to glean in  
another field."—*Ruth* ii. 8.

---



NE of the most beautiful pictures Holy Scripture presents to our notice is that of Ruth, whose history forms the subject of one of the books of the Old Testament.

After the death of her first husband, Ruth leaves her family and her country, and attaches herself to Naomi her step-mother, and to the religion of the True God. She returns with Naomi to dwell in the land of Judæa, and there, ministering to the wants of her to whom she has devoted herself, she is not ashamed to glean the corn in the fields of the wealthy Boaz. Led by Divine inspiration, Boaz recognises her as she timidly follows the reapers, and with refined delicacy he first bids them drop a rich harvest of grain into Ruth's hands, and then invites her

to take her place among them and to share their hire.

But this is not all. In Ruth the Divine Providence discovers to Boaz her whom he ought to espouse according to the laws of his country. He consequently takes her to himself; and this holy union becomes the stem from which, after three successive generations, the royal prophet David proceeds.

If we consider this touching narrative merely as a true history it is full of interest for us, and contains many useful lessons. We may admire the religiousness of Naomi, the virtue of Ruth, the generous hospitality of Boaz, and above all, the wonderful guidance which Divine Providence exercised over all these saintly characters.

These primary considerations, however, are not alone enough for us, and they are far from exhausting the rich materials which the inspired writer proposes for our edification and instruction.

According to the doctrine of S. Paul, and the general teaching of the Fathers, the Old Testament, from first to last, is but a figure of the New, and there is not a single person or fact in the Old Testament that is not at the same time a figure or symbol, and as it were a prophecy, which reveals itself in the New.

From this point of view the history of Ruth, charming as it is in itself, is but the glittering

shell from which we may gather the more precious fruit.

Boaz is not only the wealthy proprietor of the field into which Ruth comes to glean; he is also a figure of our Divine Saviour Jesus Christ, Who in His Gospel often compares Himself to an husbandman.

In like manner, it is not enough for us to consider Ruth simply as a young Moabitess who leaves her own country and follows her step-mother Naomi to Judæa. In the first place, Ruth represents the whole Gentile world, abandoning its false gods and joining that portion of the Jewish people who remained faithful, in order to form one nation with them, and to worship with them the true God only. In the second place, Ruth is the image of a holy soul that renounces the world and its vain pleasures to attach herself solely to Jesus Christ.

And then, pursuing the same course of ideas, when I ask myself what is represented by the blessed field of Boaz, where Ruth at first goes to glean, and where afterwards she gathers an abundant harvest for herself and Naomi, and where, lastly, she contracts with the Master a union so precious in the sight of God; when I think, too, under how humble an appearance the God of the Eucharist has deigned to hide Himself; when I remember that in this Sacrament of love we call Him the Bread of Life and the Corn of the elect, I have no hesitation in

seeing and loving to see, under the symbol of the field of Boaz, the Divine Field of the Eucharist.

It is on this especial gift that I pause, wishing in this light to meditate devoutly upon those features and words of the sacred history which I have taken for the text.

## II.

Notice, then, in the first place, that Naomi and Ruth are in want and poverty, until the day when the field of Boaz and its rich harvest is disclosed to them. Oh ! how marvellously does this first feature of the history agree with the Divine Eucharist ! This Mystery, doubtless, does not, indeed, include the whole of Christianity ; our holy religion offers us besides a thousand consolations, a thousand supports, a thousand blessings ; and yet where is the pious soul that does not feel in her innermost depths that without the Eucharist there would be nothing but misery for her ? The most fertile fields cannot satisfy her hunger so long as she has not gleaned at least some ears in the field of the Eucharist. The most abundant sources of grace appear dry and barren by the side of that ; and so long as she has not met Thee, O God of the Eucharist, she cries with David, "Like as the hart desireth the water-brooks, so longeth my soul after Thee, O God." Psalm xlvi. 1.

Now let us follow holy Ruth, as she first enters the field of Boaz. How timidly she advances, keeping apart from the wealthy reapers who cover the country ; how unworthy she feels herself to join them, and how far is she from any ambition to share their abundant harvest ! But neither her humility nor her fear deprive her of her sweet confidence. She trusts that

Matt. vi. 28. Providence, which clothes the lilies of the field and feeds the birds of heaven, will cause to fall at her feet some of those ears of corn of which she stands in need. Soon she gathers them up, and then what happiness is hers ! She hides herself from the looks of all, and carries away with holy joy the first sheaf that she has collected.

Such are the feelings of Ruth. Do they not recall to our recollection what ours have sometimes been ? Ah ! we too have seen the day when first it was granted to us to enter the Divine Field of the Eucharist.

We were yet very young, and approached the holy Table with childlike awe and deep humility. We followed our parents, our older Christian friends, or those who had initiated us in the knowledge of these Divine Mysteries, and whose wisdom and virtue we admired. We did not, indeed, pretend to so rich a harvest as they gathered day by day at the foot of the holy Altar ; but we longed at least to glean some few ears in their steps. We desired, like the humble

Canaanite, to gather up some of the crumbs which fell from those rich tables ; but our humility quenched not our ardent desire and our filial trust, for it seemed to us that the Divine Father would not repel us, Who with so much love had "suffered the little children to come unto Him." Nor were our hopes disappointed. On the sacred day of our first Communion we gleaned those ears of corn, and what a happiness was ours ! We drew near with tears of humility and penitence, and retired bearing with joy the first sheaf, no longer in our hands but in our heart.

## III.

Boaz was not slow to distinguish Ruth at her first entrance into the field, for he is the figure of the true Master, the Divine Father, of Whom it is written that He knew us before we were formed in the womb. He never repels any who come and knock at the door of His field, but promises the recompense of an abundant harvest to him who gleans courageously the first ears of corn.

Now let us consider the conduct of Boaz towards Ruth, and the words in which he addresses her. "Hearest thou not, my daughter? Go not to glean in another field,—*Audi, filia, ne vadas in alterum agrum ad*

*colligendum.*" Then addressing the reapers, he Ruth ii. 16. bids them "let fall some of the handfuls of purpose for her, that she may glean them." Nor is this all; he lets her glean even among the sheaves, and share the reapers' harvest. It is as though he had said, "Up to this time, perhaps, thou hast sought in other quarters for wealth and happiness; but give up now these useless attempts; you will find only in the Divine Field of the Eucharist that which you are longing and seeking for; but there you will find it ever; go not to glean in another field, *Nevadas in alterum agrum.*"

Oh! how touching a lesson have we here! and who shall give us grace to comprehend it?

Truly, when we enter into life, there are many fields open to us. There is, indeed, the field of the Church, where grow the virtues of the Saints, where good works bear their fruit, and where ripen in abundance the divine ears of the Eucharist. But, side by side with this field, there are those of the world, where impure delights flourish, and where empty honours are reaped.

Alas! so foolish are we, that it is towards these latter that we most often bend our steps. We think, as Holy Scripture says, to "crown ourselves with rosebuds before they are withered,"

Wisd. ii. 8. and that "none of us go without his part of our voluptuousness" [*Nullum pratum sit, quod non pertranseat luxuria nostra*]. Ah! if one day, recalled by God's grace and van-

quished by the poverty of our own heart, we return to the Field of the Eucharist,—if, in the joy of our soul, we there have gleaned some precious ears,—let us listen to the voice of the Father, Who says unto us as He said to Ruth, “My child, go not to glean in another field, *Ne vadas in alterum agrum;*” and in order that our joy may be full and our harvest abundant, He will be willing to do for us what He did for Ruth,—He will commend us to His reapers, who will distribute to us the riches of their Master.

And the reapers,—who are they? I reply, first, that they are the holy Angels; for is it not Angels' food that nourishes man in the Eucharist? and are not the Angels ministers unto us of the grace of God? But the reapers are also the Priests; for it is to the Priests of Jesus Christ that He has committed the dispensation of this Holy Mystery; it is they who day by day at the Altar put into our hands the Eucharistic sheaves. Ah! since the first time that the Sacramental words were uttered, how many ears of corn have been gathered in the hands of the Priests, and how many have fallen from those same hands to nourish the hearts of the faithful! It is they whom the Divine Master bids day by day employ their zeal and industry, that each and every soul may receive the daily bread He has prepared for each. The Priests make ready the Divine Banquet; to the Corn of the Elect they unite the

wine that maketh the maids cheerful, and they  
 Zech. ix. 17. cry aloud, “Eat, oh friends; drink,  
 Cant. v. 1. yea, drink abundantly, oh beloved;  
*Comedite, amici, et bibite et inebri-*  
*amini, carissimi.”*

## IV.

The sacred writer points out to us, in the course of his story, the two great advantages which holy Ruth gathers from the conduct she pursues. First, she finds abundant subsistence in the field of Boaz both for herself and Naomi, and wealth takes the place of misery in the household of these two poor widows. Secondly, Wisd. viii. 1. Divine Providence, which so “sweetly doth order all things,” brings about a happy and blessed union between Ruth and Boaz, arising out of the circumstance of her coming into his field.

And here, again, we are led to think of those precious fruits that the soul derives from the Holy Eucharist.

First, the Eucharist is the wealth of the soul. Without It, even for an instant, the soul is poor indeed; but with It she possesses all things. Without It the soul is weak indeed; but with It she becomes mighty. Oh! give me a soul that has loved and tasted the Eucharist; she will comprehend what I am saying; she will understand that the treasure hidden in the field of Boaz is the Holy Eucharist.

And not the treasure only. It is, at the same time, both the means and the pledge of our eternal union with Jesus Christ ; for it was not enough for Boaz to have given Ruth a share of his harvest, he also united himself to her near the very place where she had gleaned.

In all this matter Naomi does but obey the secret designs of Providence. She advises Ruth one evening to go and lie down at the feet of Boaz as he sleeps at the entering in of the field, and then to await in silence what God shall require of her.

Ruth obeys her step-mother ; and Boaz, on awaking in the morning and finding her stretched at his feet, covers her with his mantle, in token of the alliance which he wishes to contract with her. After certain formalities required by the Law of Moses, he takes her for his wife as being her nearest kinsman.

Let us, then, pierce the veil of these symbols ; let us act towards Jesus Christ as Ruth did towards Boaz ; let us go like her and repose in peace and joy before the door of the Tabernacle, where Jesus awaits us, and where He sleeps hidden beneath the Eucharistic elements. He <sup>Cant. v. 2.</sup> sleeps, but His heart waketh. He will awake for us, and will say unto us, as Boaz said to Ruth, "Blessed be thou of the Lord, my daughter, for thou hast shewed more kindness in the latter end than at the beginning, inasmuch

Ruth iii. 10. as thou followedst not young men whether poor or rich." He will do more than cover us with His mantle : He will unite His Divine Heart to ours, and will join Himself for ever with us, as being indeed our nearest Kinsman, and One Who is dearest to us of all.

## V.

But if the Christian soul receives such favour from the Holy Eucharist, if by It she is so enriched and united so intimately with her God, is it not fair that she should seek in return to render herself less unworthy of such great blessings by practising those virtues which are most pleasing in the eyes of the God of the Eucharist ?

And these virtues, what are they ? In order that we may know them, let us look again at the history of Ruth, and learn from this saintly woman how she prepared herself to receive the favours of Boaz.

These virtues seem to me to have been principally the following, *viz.*, Chastity, Charity, and Humility.

First, Chastity : for this is the first praise which the sacred writer accords her after the death of her former husband, that she had renounced the hope of a second union in order to attach herself to Naomi her step-mother, and to live with her in the holy estate of widowhood.

Secondly, Charity : for it was in order that she might assist Naomi, and support her with charitable care, that Ruth determined to go and glean in the field of Boaz.

Lastly, Humility : for if Charity determined her to enter the field and expose herself to view, a modest Humility kept her apart from the crowd of reapers, and caused her to choose the lowest place amongst them.

Chastity, Charity, Humility : such are, then the virtues of Ruth ; and such are those which the God of the Eucharist requires of us.

First, Chastity : "for who shall ascend into the hill of the Lord, Ps. xxxiv. 3, 4. or who shall rise up in His holy place ? Even he that hath clean hands and a pure heart." The God of the Eucharist is He Who "feedeth among the lilies." And she Cant. ii. 16. who first received into her heart the Divine Word was Mary, the purest of virgins.

Secondly, Humility : for this virtue is as a pleasant shade where purity hides herself in order to preserve her freshness. The more the Eucharist exalts us, the more must we humble ourselves. Mary, when she became the Mother of God, called herself His hand-maid. Jesus entered not into the centurion's house till he had said, Luke i. 38. "Lord, I am not worthy that Thou Matt. viii. 8. shouldest come under my roof."

Lastly, Charity : for who shall venture to approach without Love the Sacrament of Love ? I may be both chaste and humble, but if I have  
 1 Cor. xiii. 8. not charity I am nothing. God is  
 1 John iv. 8. Charity ; for God is Love. He is  
 1 John iv. 8. Love in the highest Heavens, where  
 He makes happy the Angelic choirs, and they  
 love Him. He is Love in all nature, and nature  
 salutes Him, and loves Him. But, above all, is  
 He Love in the Sacrament of the Altar, and  
 there, above all, ought we to love Him. The  
 Eucharist requires of us purity of soul, because  
 of the glory of God Who therein hides Himself ; It demands humility, by reason of the veils  
 wherewith He covers Himself ; and it also claims  
 our love, in the name of that Love which He  
 there manifests to us. But the Love of God can  
 never be separated from the love of our brethren ;  
 and no soul will go to glean in that Divine Field  
 without purposing, like Ruth, to nourish a Naomi.

Oh Chastity, Humility, Charity ! lovely vir-  
 tues, which give us fitting dispositions for the  
 Holy Eucharist ! ye are as a triple Ornament of  
 the wedding garment of the soul that is invited  
 to the Heavenly Feast. It is ye who make that

Matt. xxv. 1. soul like unto the wise virgins of the  
 Gospel. Chastity is the lamp that  
 is alight in their hands ; Charity is the oil which  
 sustains the flame ; and Humility is as the sweet  
 sleep that lulls them to rest in expectation of the  
 Divine Spouse. Soon a heavenly voice is heard,

"Rise up and follow Him." Oh happy souls, hesitate not to respond to His summons. Ye are more highly favoured than Ruth, for He Who invites you is greater than Boaz, and the Tabernacle to which He admits you is greater than the field of corn. The touching history upon which we have been meditating is but a symbol; the Eucharist is the reality. Believe me, neither the richness of that field, nor the goodness of Boaz, nor the happiness of Ruth, can be compared with the treasures of the Eucharist, or, above all, with the bliss which the soul enjoys when she tastes the sweetness thereof. May this holy Sacrament be our greatest and only joy in time, as It will be our only happiness in Heaven !





## Wherein Jesus Christ loveth us.

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“Dilexi vos, dicit Dominus ; et dixistis : In quo dilexisti nos ?”

“I have loved you, saith the Lord ; yet ye say, Wherein hast Thou loved us ?”—*Malachi i. 2.*

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KNOW no sweeter words than one can hear from the mouth of God than those which He addresses to His people by the Prophet Malachi,—“I have loved you, *Ego dilexi vos*”; and at the same time, I know no language harder or more unjust than that in which the people answer to these loving words, “Wherein hast Thou loved us ? *In quo dilexisti nos ?*” This God, Who deigned to call Himself the God of Abraham, of Isaac, and of Jacob, Who by the might of His arm delivered Israel from the yoke of Egypt, and established them with riches and power in a fruitful soil, ceased not to enlighten them with His light, to gladden them by His presence, to guide them by His messengers and prophets ; this God, con-

fiding in the numberless blessings He had bestowed upon them, thought to recall these blessings to the minds of His people, and to sum them up in one word, "I have loved you," and the people answer Him by an insult, "Wherein hast Thou loved us?"

Alas! Israel is not the only nation that God has cherished, and to which He has the right to say, "I have loved you"; nor is Israel the only nation that addresses to God the insulting answer, "Wherein hast Thou loved us?"

We too, Christian people, of whom Israel is only the type and figure; whom the Saviour has cherished in His tender bosom for eighteen centuries, even as a nurse cherisheth her children; whom He would gather under His wings as a hen gathereth her chickens; whom He seeks to detach from the earth and teaches to fly to higher regions, as "an eagle stirreth up her nest, and fluttereth over her young, and beareth them on her wings"; we it is, above all, whom God has in view when He utters these words of the Prophet, "I have loved you"; and we too, more ungrateful than Israel of old, fear not to answer every day, "Wherein hast Thou loved us?"

Yes, I repeat it; we cannot address to God a more bitter reproach than this; for there is nothing that more directly attacks Him in His dearest attribute, His goodness, or that can wound

Him more severely than this reproach, which strikes at the very root of His tender care for us.

Were a human creature, in his pride and folly, to dare to dispute God's power, and say to Him "Wherein art Thou powerful?" it would certainly be a crime and a blasphemy; or if, measuring by our imperfect vision the depth of the Divine counsels, we should be rash enough to accuse the justice of God, and to say, "Why has God done this? and wherein is He just?" we should indeed be very guilty, and should expose ourselves to the severest judgment of His disowned justice. But what is it to address God in these words, "Wherein art Thou powerful?" or, "Wherein art Thou just?" compared with those which are the most cruel, the most blasphemous, the most impious of all, "Wherein hast Thou loved us?"

Ah! whenever we thus speak, if we will but give ear to the voice of God, Who deigns to defend Himself against our ingratitude, and to plead the cause of His own goodness, we shall be quickly convinced, and shall well understand, Job ix. 3. with holy Job, that the man who will contend with God is not easily justified, and "cannot answer Him one of a thousand."

## II.

"Wherein hast Thou loved me?" says the poor man. "My life is one of severe toil, and the world's highway has nought but thorns and briers for me. The rich man's field produces no

corn to nourish me, nor does his vineyard bear grapes to refresh me. Money, pleasure, joy, all that makes others happy, is denied me. Wherein, then, hast Thou loved me?"

"I have loved thee," replies the Saviour, "and, because thou wert poor, for thy sake I willed Myself to be born in poverty, to live in poverty, to die in poverty. I have loved thee, and that is why, the very first time I opened My mouth, I said, 'Blessed are the poor.' I have loved thee; and therefore, when all have forsaken thee, I, Who am thy truest treasure, have never deserted thee. The rich man's field may have no corn for thee, but in the Field of My Providence it will ever spring up for the supply of thy daily bread. Thou hast not in this world, it is true, either treasures which the worm devours and the thief steals, or pleasures which corrupt the heart and pass away with this life, but instead of these thou hast the first right to the kingdom of Heaven, for I have said, 'Blessed are the poor, for theirs is the kingdom of Heaven.'" Matt. v. 3.

"Wherein hast Thou loved me?" says the afflicted soul. "I am in the depths of bitterness. Thou hast taken from me those who were dearer to me than myself,—parents, husband, wife, brother, sister, or child. It was Thyself, O Saviour, who didst form between us these close and tender ties. But why didst Thou form them, or why hast Thou broken them? and having broken them, wherein hast Thou loved me?"

"I have loved thee," replies the Saviour, "for it was thee whom I had in view when I said, 'Blessed Matt. v. 5. are they that mourn, for they shall be comforted.' To sanctify thy tears, and to help thee in shedding them, I Myself wept over Lazarus ; and to teach thee to sorrow John ix. 35. not as those without hope, I brought to life again him over whom I wept. Every soul is saddened by the griefs of mortality, and for that reason I willed that Mine own should be sorrowful even unto the death of the Cross. A bitter grief overwhelms thee ; but whosoever thou art who travellest along the hard road of sorrow, Lam. i. 12. behold and see if there be any sorrow like unto My sorrow ! "

Nor is it only to the poor, the afflicted, and the suffering that the Saviour addresses this language ; no human being is excepted from His tenderness ; no one has the right to say to Him, "Wherein hast Thou loved me ? "

I have loved thee, He says to the rich man, for it is thee whom I have appointed the minister of My Providence and the steward of the poor. I have loved thee, He says to the rulers of this world, for to thee have I delivered My sword to punish the wicked, and My sovereign power to reward the good. I have loved thee, He says to the aged, for I have placed on thy white locks the crown of prudence. I have loved thee, He says to the young, for I have chosen thy pure heart for My tabernacle. I have loved thee,

He says to the little children, for I have willed that ye should always be able to approach Me.

But when God spake to the people of Israel by the mouth of His prophet, and said, "I have loved you," He addressed, at the same time, all the nations of the world, and said to them, I have loved you, for it is you who from age to age subserve the designs of My Providence in the world. I have loved you, for it is to Me that you owe your wise laws and your just rulers. I have loved you, for it is I Who on the field of battle have given victory to your banners and on the ocean riches to your flag. I have loved you, for it is I Who still sustain you in your weakness, Who correct you in your faults, and Who, at the moment of your utmost peril, when all seems lost, supply you with suppliant voices to implore My aid on your behalf, and with a powerful hand to save you.

### III.

Here let us pause, and reflect for a moment why we have been thus insisting upon these loving words of God, and why we noticed especially that they were meant for all men and for all people. It was in order that we might be assured that they were addressed not more directly nor more tenderly to any than to ourselves, even to us whom the Saviour has chosen from all eternity to be the faithful servants and the devout friends of the Holy Eucharist.

"Oh ! how greatly have I loved you!" repeats to us without ceasing this Divine Saviour in His adorable Sacrament; whether He speaks to us more openly amid the ceremonies of the Church, or from the depths of the tabernacle, or even without our own houses, He entrusts this sweet secret to our ears. Ah ! if others dare to raise a doubt, or have the rashness to demand the "wherein" of Thy love, we, O Saviour, hesitate not, we doubt not, and never shall a thought of ingratitude or of mistrust cause us to answer, "Wherein hast Thou loved us ? "

But it is right to add that this question, although culpable when addressed to God in doubt of His goodness, is so no longer when it has for its object a more careful research and a deeper investigation into the means which God employs as a witness of His love ; for then, far from being culpable, "Blessed," says the royal prophet, "are they that keep His testimonies, and seek Him with their whole heart." And so,

Psalm cxix. 2. when Jesus Christ says to us in His adorable Sacrament, "I have loved you," we fear not to enter into sweet colloquy with Him, we seek from the depths of our heart to know wherein so much love is hidden beneath the Eucharistic veils, and we say unto Him, not in mistrust, but rather with a holy desire to increase in ourselves the gratitude which we owe to Him, "Wherein hast Thou loved us? *in quo dilexisti nos?*"

## IV.

To comprehend this it is enough, to my mind, to meditate attentively upon those simple words wherein the beloved disciple retraces with so much truthfulness every thought of His Divine Master at the Institution of the Holy Eucharist. "Jesus, having loved His own which were in the world, loved them unto the end"; John xiii. 1. as if he had said, Ah ! yes, without doubt, the life of Jesus Christ has been all love ; love at Bethlehem ; love at Nazareth ; love at Cana ; love in all the towns of Judæa ; love on all the waves of Tiberias ; love everywhere and always ; but love surpassing all, love more intense, love more tender, love more loving, in the last parting in the Upper Chamber.

But if the Love of the Saviour spreads itself thus over His whole life in such wonderful profusion, we may truly say that it is concentrated wholly and entirely in the Divine Eucharist. Let us, then, meditate upon this holy Sacrament ; for there we shall find united, like three precious treasures where His love shines most brightly, first, His Heart, which has loved us so much ; secondly, His Passion,—the great instrument and the wonderful proof of His love ; and thirdly, His Divine Grace, which is the fruit and the consequence of His Love, through the merits of His Passion.

First, His Divine Heart ; for His Heart is present there ; it lives and throbs for us there. Not

indeed that Jesus Christ is not whole and entire in the Holy Eucharist ; but just as in the scenes of His Passion, though whole and entire under the shadow of the Cross, we yet fix our attention chiefly upon the Head crowned with thorns, on the pierced Feet and Hands, on the Side transfix'd by the spear, so in the Eucharist, what we seek above all, and what we find above all, is His sacred Heart.

I ask myself, "Wherein has Jesus Christ loved me ?" and I answer with the fullest assurance, "He has loved me even to the giving me His Heart."

What more certain proof, what more tender witness, couldest Thou have chosen, O my God, and who shall dare to prefer any other to it ?

It is true that Thou hast left me Thy word ; but this word derives its power only from its source, Thy Heart : Thou hast loved me more in giving me Thy Heart. It is true, again, that Thou hast left me the example of Thy Divine virutes ; but it is Thy Heart which should, above all, teach me to be meek and lowly : Thou hast loved me more in giving me Thy Heart.

What more shall I say ! In order to comfort me under my trials Thou hast given me the hope of Thy eternal blessings ; but I am a man dwelling in this land of exile, and I need some present good that shall this very day comfort and strengthen me : Thou hast loved me more in giving me this very day Thy Heart.

Ah ! the Apostle S. John feared not to write, when speaking of himself, that Jesus loved him, because he had once inclined his head upon the bosom of his Master ; and cannot we say, O my God, that we all are of those whom Thou lovest, since not once only, but every day, our heart is united to Thine in the Holy Eucharist !

Secondly, the Passion of the Saviour ; for of this the Eucharist contains the living memorial. For this heart which I adore on the Altar is there presented to me in the condition of a Victim offered in sacrifice. It is there, as it were, pierced by the sword of love, as it once was by the spear of the soldier. The Eucharist, in fact, chiefly recalls to our memory the Passion of Jesus Christ ; It is the New Testament in His blood, the covenant of His death ; and we cannot assist at the Divine Sacrifice without being, at the same time, witnesses of the scene on Calvary.

And, therefore, if I ask myself again wherein Jesus Christ has loved me, *in quo dilexisti nos*, I reply a second time, He has loved me even to giving Himself to me every day in the Holy Eucharist as a saving Victim for my sins. He has loved me even to reproducing every day before my eyes the sacrifice which saves me, even to laving me every day in the Blood of the Lamb which has redeemed me.

Oh ! let us well understand this great proof of His Love.

In the eternal counsels of Providence it was

not only the Life of the God-man that was to save the world ; it was not only His word, or His example, or His miracles ; it was His Passion and His Death. But as was His Passion and His Death, so was also the perpetuity of the Eucharistic Sacrifice, which is one with the Sacrifice of Calvary. We cannot separate the one from the other,—the Passion from the Eucharist. Whatever the Passion avails, that also the Eucharist avails ; whatever the Love of Jesus Christ in His Passion, such also is His Love in the Eucharist. The Passion and the Eucharist together form a complete whole, which we are not permitted to rend asunder ; and hence it pleases me, in following out this doctrine, to understand of the Eucharist those mighty words of the Saviour, “Greater

*John xv. 13.* love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends.”

Yes, my Saviour, that is indeed most true ; first, to die an ignominious death upon the Cross of Calvary ; to die in the midst of tortures to expiate our sins ; and then, throughout all the ages to come, to offer Thyself every moment in the condition of death upon our altars. First, to deliver Thyself as a bleeding Victim into the hands of the executioners to redeem our offences ; and then to throw Thyself every day into our arms as a Victim of love for our happiness ! This is, indeed, to love as none other could ever have done ; and here, then, O my God, is the “wherein Thou hast loved us.”

Thirdly, the Gift of Grace, which is the fruit of the Passion of the Saviour, and which the Eucharist communicates to us in the fullest abundance as being the most august of all the Sacraments.

The other Sacraments, indeed, are productive of Grace in us only inasmuch as they identify us with Jesus Christ, Who alone is truly just, truly holy, and alone worthy in Himself of the friendship of God. Their matter is an efficacious sign only inasmuch as it represents the Blood of Jesus Christ flowing for us, and His Flesh uniting itself to ours. Thus the water of Baptism,—it is the Blood of Jesus Christ that cleanses us ; the oil of Confirmation,—it is the power of Jesus Christ struggling with His sacred Flesh against the powers of darkness ; but the Eucharist is this very Flesh and Blood itself, which is made one with us in such a manner that “it is not we who live, but Jesus Christ <sup>Gal. ii. 20.</sup> Who liveth in us.” Shall we not, then, from henceforth become the friends of God ? Shall we not, by this Divine union, be placed in a state of eminent grace ? The Eucharist, indeed, by reason of Its very excellence, exacts of us the most perfect depositions. To approach It, our conscience must be pure ; Baptism or Repentance must have previously conferred upon us the *first grace*, which the Eucharist gives not ; but It is, nevertheless, the most powerful instrument of grace in us,—the most sure means of establishing

and confirming us in the friendship of God. Here, then, again, O Lord Jesus, is the “wherein Thou hast loved us.”

Thou hast loved us in communicating to us Thy grace, as Thou didst love us in becoming a sacrifice for us, as thou didst love us in giving us Thy Heart ; and this threefold witness of Thy love I find in the Holy Eucharist. Thy Heart which loves me, Thy Passion which saves me, Thy grace which sanctifies me, are for me one and the same, and all are comprised in the Eucharist of Thy love, that love which I comprehend, because I have tasted of Thy Eucharist.

And therefore, Lord, each time Thou sayest unto me, as unto Thy people of old, “ I have loved thee, *dilexi vos*,” fear not that I should inquire or demand of Thee “ Wherein hast Thou loved me?” but, fixing my thoughts entirely upon Thy Divine Tabernacle, and watering it with the tears of my gratitude and joy, I will say unto Thee, “ Yea, Lord, Thou lovest me, and I know wherein Thou hast loved me.”

## V.

Lastly, there is another thought which this meditation suggests to me, and I gladly follow it because it will lead me to a practical conclusion.

In the text of Malachi, it is God Who says to His people “ I have loved you,” and the people

answer "Wherein hast Thou loved us?" But now let us change sides, and suppose that it is we who are addressing God in these words, "I have loved Thee." Ah! how many times have I not used this language to Him! "I love Thee"; it is my best prayer, and that which comes most readily to my lips. "I love Thee"; they are words which occupy all the hours of the day, all the places where I bend my steps, all the situations of my life; they lighten my troubles, they increase my joys. "I love Thee;" it is the burden of all my hymns, and the echo of all the voices of nature; it is the first stammering of my cradle, as it will be the last sigh of my heart. "I love Thee, I love Thee"; yes, this is, indeed, my language; but then, I ask, has not God on His part great reason to question me, and to say, "Wherein hast thou loved me?"

Ah! let us beware lest we love God only with our lips, and so be like those who "honour Him only with their lips," while "their heart is far from Him." The Lord <sup>Matt. xv. 8.</sup> requires of us that we should love Him by our works, by our repentance, by sincere conversion. The rule of conduct He traces out for us is very precise: "He that loveth Me," He says, "doeth the will of My Father which is in Heaven"; and again, "This is the will of God, even your sanctification." Oh! <sup>I Thess. iv. 3.</sup> what a love should ours be! glowing with chastity, humility, patience, and the practice of all Chris-

tian virtues! The purity of him who is chaste has a voice like that of the angels to say unto God, without ceasing, "I love Thee." The hidden life of him who is humble, his solitude and his silence, alike cry unto God, and say unto Him, "I love Thee." Affliction, borne with patience, cries unto God in the noblest language, "I love Thee." To be chaste, humble, patient, charitable, and to become saints,—here is the love that God demands of us.

Faithful to this Divine invitation, and loving God by our actions, as we are loved of Him by His blessings from day to day, may we merit the recompense which the Saviour promises to all John xiv. 23. who love Him,—"He that loveth Me keepeth My sayings, and My Father will love him, and We will come unto him and make our abode with him."





## Confidence.

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“Ego sum, nolite timere.”  
“It is I ; be not afraid.”—*Matt. xiv. 27. Luke xxiv. 36.*

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F all the sayings of Jesus Christ none inspires us with fuller confidence in Him than this, which He addressed on two occasions to His Apostles,—

“It is I ; be not afraid” ; and none can, I think, afford Him greater pleasure, as the subject of our meditations.

The Apostles were naturally fearful and timid ; they were little accounted of by the world, and were possessed of no power in it : for it is littleness and weakness that God ever chooses wherewith to confound the <sup>1 Cor. i. 27.</sup> strong and mighty ; and hence it is that their Divine Master so often said to them, “It is I ; be not afraid.”

One day He said to them, “Fear not them which kill the body. Are <sup>Matt. x. 29.</sup> not two sparrows sold for a farthing ! and one of

them shall not fall on the ground without your Father. Fear ye not, therefore ; ye are of more value than many sparrows."

On another occasion He said, "Fear not, little flock ; for it is your Father's good Luke xii. 32. pleasure to give you the kingdom."

In like manner, under other circumstances, John xvi. 33. He said, "In the world ye shall have tribulation ; but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world."

But of all the reasons which Jesus Christ offers to His Disciples to animate their courage, I know of none more convincing, none more solid, than those few words which (in substance)

Matt. xiv. 27. He twice repeats in the Holy Gospels, "Fear not ; I am with Luke xxiv. 36. you." "It is I ; be not afraid."

The first time that He thus addressed His Apostles was at midnight, when they had embarked in a frail boat, and a violent storm was endangering them. Then Jesus suddenly drew near to them, walking upon the waters, and said unto them, "It is I ; be not afraid" ; teaching them, thus, that He in Whom they should put their trust was the Lord of nature, and had power over its laws ; and making them understand that they themselves also, who were about to become the ship of the Church, so long as they should walk in His steps and be united to Him, should, like Himself, calm the tempests, and tread under foot the stormy waves of the ocean of the world.

The other occasion on which our Lord used these words was after His Resurrection, when He appeared to His disciples who, for fear of the Jews, had met together with closed doors ; and He said, “ Peace be unto you ; why are ye troubled ? Behold My hands and My feet, that it is I Myself ” ; thus strengthening them by His Presence, making them witnesses to His greatest and most decisive miracle, and above all, teaching them to understand that they need not fear even death itself, since He who stood in their midst had Himself overcome death.

## II.

But it is not to His Apostles alone that Jesus Christ utters these words ; He repeats them to us and to all Christians : “ It is I ; be not afraid.” “ Fear not ; I am with you.”

And what words could give us a stronger assurance, or a more invincible defence against the dangers, the trials, and the temptations of the world, than these ? Instead of Himself saying to us “ It is I,” He might have limited Himself to sending His Prophets, His Apostles, His Ministers ; and they, invested with power from on high, and opposing the truth of their words to the errors of the world, and the energetic virtue of their examples to the allurements of the age, might well have had the right to say to us, “ Fear not ; our strength, which is not our own,—our valour, which is not our own,—our words, which are not our

own, but the strength, the valour, the words of God are with you ; be not afraid." Or God might well have deputed one of His angels, like that one to whom He entrusted the young Tobias, and who, like Raphael, knowing all the paths through which we should have to pass, might have led and guided us in peace, saying to us at every step, "Fear not ; I am with you."

But I love much better to hear the Inspirer of Prophets, the Master of Apostles, the King of Angels, Himself ; the Creator of Heaven and earth, my Redeemer and my Saviour, Jesus Christ Himself, saying unto me, "It is I ; be not afraid."

Yes ; it is Jesus Christ Himself Who utters these words, and it is from Him alone I love to hear them. For, indeed, besides Himself and those whom He sends, what created being, what element, what dominion, what power, could recognize the right to say to any man, "It is I ; be not afraid" ?

I launch on the calm ocean the ship that bears my riches and my hopes ; not a wave, not a breath, not a cloud of Heaven seems to oppose me ; each says to me, "Trust the peaceable waves, the bright sky, the sails that swell in accordance with your wishes." The ship starts on her voyage ; but quicker than thought arises the storm ; the thunder roars ; and the ocean swallows up what I entrusted to it. I have been deceived, then ; neither the bright sky, nor the calm sea, can say to the voyagers of this world, "Be not afraid."

And shall I be more secure upon the solid earth that I tread under my feet? I lay in its bosom the foundations of the house wherein I dwell: the roots of the plants that nurture me. Fool that I am! the earthquake swallows up all that I possess. The earth can never say to him whom it supports and nourishes, "Be not afraid; put your trust in me."

I have some friends upon whom I rely. If they are weak they can do nothing for me; if they are strong they generally forget me. One is terrified at the difficulty of assisting me; another is torn from me by death; and at last I find not one who has acquired the right to say to me, "Be not afraid; put your trust in me."

Jesus Christ, on the contrary, addresses all in these comforting words, and keeps His promise. "It is I," He says to the sinner; "be not afraid: I, Who am the Lamb of God, slain upon Calvary to blot out thy sins; I, Whose heart has sighed for thee; I, Whose feet have wearied themselves for thee; I, Whose eyes have wept for thee; I, Whose hands have been stretched out for thee; I, Whose blood has been shed for thee; it is I; be not afraid."

"It is I," He says to the timid and wavering soul; "be not afraid. I, thy Saviour; I, thy Light and thy Salvation; whom then, Psalm xxvii. 1. shalt thou fear? I, the Strength of thy life; of whom, then, shalt thou be afraid? Though the wicked come upon thee to eat up

thy flesh, they shall stumble and fall before Me ; and though an host should encamp against thee, thy heart shall not fear ; for I am with thee."

"It is I," He says to the just ; "be not afraid. I, Who try thee at times, it is true, but only to multiply thy merit ; I, Who chasten thee at times, but only because I love thee ; I, Who will be in Heaven thy exceeding great reward ; fear not ; it is I."

### III.

These words of confidence in Jesus Christ, which He loves so often to repeat, seem of themselves all-sufficient to explain His Coming into this world, His Birth, His Life, His Sufferings, and His Death.

His Coming into the world : for the God of the Jews used a totally different language towards that stubborn and rebellious people. He spoke not unto them, but out of the midst of the lightning ; His voice mingled with the roar of the thunder ; and the throne from which He pronounced His sayings was a burning mountain. And so the Exod. xx. 19. people said to Moses, " Speak thou with us, and we will hear ; but let not God speak with us, lest we die."

Ah ! Christians are much fonder of hearing Jesus Christ speak to them ! But let us taste and see what meekness was there in His Birth ; what gentleness in His Life ; what goodness and what love in His Passion and His Death !

Let us consider the Infant Jesus at Bethlehem : what a meek and humble spectacle is that ! and how does every part of it inspire us with confidence ! This Infant is God ; but where is His Divine Majesty ? This Infant is a King ; but where is His power ? I see only a little Babe on His Mother's knee ; near Him a poor workman ; and above Him a choir of Angels, singing, Peace to men of good-will ! And to illuminate this scene, a star comes out of the East and sheds its tranquil light. Ah ! when the shepherds and the wise men approach this Holy Child to worship Him, does He not seem to say, by His Infant smile, and His Mother's caress, and the Angels' voices, and the star's peaceful rays, " It is I ; be not afraid " ?

From Bethlehem He passes to Nazareth ; from the cradle to the workshop ; the one as lowly as the other. You have still nothing to fear, either from the charms of the Child Who increases in wisdom and in grace in the sight of God, or from the docility of the Son Who knows nothing but obedience to His Mother, or from the humility of the young Man Who hides Himself for thirty years. At Nazareth, as at Bethlehem, He says to you still, " It is I ; be not afraid."

His public life begins, with what wonderful meekness to inspire all with confidence ! He does not strive ; He does not cry ; His voice is not heard in the streets. He says to the broken reed, " It is I, be not afraid ; I will not break

thee." He says to the smoking flax, "It is I ; be not afraid ; I will not quench thee." He says to the poor, "Fear not ; it is I Who will be your riches." He says to them that mourn, "Fear not ; it is I Who will comfort you." He says to the blind, "Fear not ; it is I Who will give thee light." He says to the paralytic, "Fear not ; it is I Who will cause thee to walk." He says to the strayed sheep, "Fear not ; it is I Who am the Good Shepherd." He says to the Prodigal Son, "Fear not ; it is I Who am thy true Father" ; and seeing him afar off, He stretches out His arms towards him, and receives him with blessing.

And, lastly, the Passion and the Death of the Saviour neither contradict nor diminish this feeling of confidence which His life inspires in us. One might have thought that He Whose Omnipotence had wrought so many miracles would, at least, have resisted His enemies, and made Himself feared of His persecutors. But far from this, He is meek even in the presence of death, obedient in the presence of the Cross, dumb as a sheep before her shearers. He gave His back to the smiters, and His cheeks to them that plucked off the hair, and His lips to the vinegar and gall ; but, at the same time, to testify that neither His sufferings nor His weakness deprived Him of aught of His Divine Majesty, and to inspire the world with the confidence that springs from power, as well as that which springs from love and goodness, just as during His life He had given so

many proofs of His Omnipotence, so also, at the very beginning of His Passion, He casts down at His feet those who would seize Him, and while dying on the Cross throws back the stones from the doors of the tombs, and covers the sun with a veil, as if He were saying to the whole world in that tremendous hour, "It is I; be not afraid; I Who am meek and lowly under all circumstances; fear not; it is I; I Who am all-powerful over nature and over the world."

## IV.

This feeling of confidence with which Jesus Christ inspired His Apostles and Disciples, and all those, who saw and heard Him during His earthly life, He willed that all faithful souls shall be partakers of, even to the end of the world. But since this confidence rested chiefly upon the Saviour's words, "Fear not; I am with you," it was necessary, in order that the confidence might be enduring, that these words should also be continually addressed to us; it was necessary that Jesus, out of His boundless love, should discover to us some means whereby He might say to us at every moment of time, and in the fullest truth, "It is I; be not afraid." This marvellous invention is the Blessed Eucharist.

Yes; it is upon our Altars day by day at the solemn moment of Consecration that Jesus Christ says to us by the mouth of the Priest,

"This is My Body ; it is I " ; and then, offering Himself to the Father as an all-availing Peace-offering, He interposes between the Father and us, and seems to add, " Be not afraid."

Here, then, is another of those words which the Holy Eucharist addresses to us in Its mysterious language,—an expression at once of the tender love of Jesus Christ for us, and the strongest incitement to the confidence which we owe to Him.

" It is I." For eighteen hundred years, since Jesus Christ left this earth, it would seem that these words could have been spoken only to the Angels and Saints in Heaven ; to them He manifests Himself perpetually in the splendour of His beauty and His glory ; and it is to them that He says from all eternity, " It is I." But in the mouth of Jesus Christ this language is not only that of Heaven ; He speaks it in the Eucharist ; He addresses it to all of us every day.

" It is I ; be not afraid." Be not afraid ; first on account of the humble veils that cover Me. There am I weaker than in the manger cradle, where the shepherds feared Me not. There am I more meek and humble than in the house of Nazareth, where Mary and Joseph feared Me not. There am I more stripped of everything than during My mortal life. Then I had not where to lay My head ; and now I ask of you only that I may repose it upon your altars and in your hearts. Be not afraid.

But again. " Be not afraid " ; for in this Sacra-

ment I have veiled My power. Be not afraid ; for there I have deposited the treasures of My grace. Be not afraid for the infirmities of your flesh ; for there is My sacred Flesh that healeth yours. Be not afraid for your past stains ; for there can you draw forth the Blood and the Water that flowed from My side to purify them. Poor wandering sheep, be not afraid ; for there is the sheepfold and the rich pasture : poor prodigal child, be not afraid ; for there is the banquet of reconciliation : poor woman of Samaria, be not afraid ; for there is the gift of God which He permits you to taste and to know : poor traveller, wounded on thy journey, be not afraid ; for there is the oil and the wine to dress thy wounds. Who-soever you are, oh men, be not afraid ; for there is the very tree of life of which it is written that "in the day ye eat thereof ye shall be as God."

Gen. iii. 5.

I hear with joy these comforting words, O my God, and on my part I do not hesitate to respond to Thy appeal to me to put my trust in Thee. When I approach Thy altar, and there hear Thee saying to me, "It is I," I adore, but I do not fear ; I love, but I do not fear ; I humble myself profoundly, but I do not fear ; I view with calmness the enemies of my soul, I despise them, and fear not ; I resign myself to the trials of life, the storms of the world, the troubles of the flesh, and I am not afraid. I have proved that this sweet confidence in Thee makes easier to me the avoidance

of sin and the practice of virtue ; and I often say  
Prov. i. 7. that as “the fear of the Lord is the  
beginning of wisdom,” its perfection  
and its consummation is a blind confidence in  
the God of the Eucharist.

## V.

But if Jesus Christ, by His Presence in the Sacrament of the Altar, secures us with so much love against disquietudes and troubles, what, on His part, does He demand of us, and what is the price of that confidence wherewith He inspires us ?

When He comes into our souls He wishes to be able to confide also in them ; He wishes that we should say to Him in our turn, with an upright heart and a sincere spirit, “ It is I, Lord ; be not afraid ; fear not for Thy long-rebellious child.”

Oh ! that I could speak thus to Thee in sincerity ! It is I, Lord, who have so often offended Thee ; I whom Thou knowest to be weak and guilty ; but I, nevertheless, Thy faithful servant ; I henceforth Thy obedient child. Fear no longer that my protestations will deceive Thee, my promises be vain, or my kisses betray Thee ; it is I ; be not afraid.

Jesus Christ will not be afraid of our past faithlessness, and He will place confidence in us, if we love Him from the bottom of our heart ; but, on the contrary, our best works without love

will not satisfy Him ; for it is written. that the wounds of him who loves are less to be feared than the deceitful kisses of him who loves not.  
“ Faithful are the wounds of a friend, but the kisses of an enemy are deceitful.”

In the beginning of His Passion, one of the twelve Apostles, one of those whom He had deigned to admit to the first Eucharist, approached Him and gave Him a kiss. Did not that kiss seem to say, “ Fear not, Lord ; it is I, your companion and friend ” ? But Judas loved not his Master, and Jesus Christ from that time had all to fear from Judas ; the kiss of the Apostle was the signal of treason.

Shortly afterwards, another Apostle, Simon Peter, denied Jesus Christ three times ; but scarcely had he committed the sin when he wept bitterly for it, and presently, being questioned by his Master, he answered Him thrice with loving penitence, “ Lord, Thou knowest that I love Thee.” It is as if he had said to Jesus, “ Be not afraid, Lord, but have confidence in me. I have sinned, but I weep ; I have sinned, but I love Thee ; I have sinned, and yet be not afraid.” And Jesus has confidence in him ; He chooses him to be the corner-stone of His Church, and puts into his hands the keys of the Kingdom of Heaven.

Let us profit by so great an example ; let us love Jesus Christ with all our heart, and He will

have full confidence in us, even as He demands of us that we should have confidence in Him.

In instituting the Eucharist Jesus Christ willed above all to establish in His Church the reign of confidence,—a confidence which He witnesses to us,—a confidence with which He inspires us,—a confidence that He wishes to have in us. Oh fools that we shall be if we respond not to such advances of His !

The day will come when the Saviour will demand of us an account concerning this special grace of confidence which we owe to the Eucharist ; that will be the day of final judgment. Jesus Christ will then manifest Himself to the guilty world ; He will have lifted up the veils from His Sacrament ; but His countenance will be terrible to those who have responded to His confidence only by ingratitude and forgetfulness. He will say unto them, “ It is I, Whom you have disowned,—I, Whom you have outraged and insulted ; It is I ; but be afraid now ; fear ye the wrath of the Lamb.”

*Rev. vi. 17.* And on the other hand, turning towards those blessed of the Father, whom sweet confidence in the Eucharist has kept in the strait way, He will say unto them, “ It is I. Ye have had much to suffer, but the time of trial Luke xii. 32. is past. Be not afraid, for it is your Father’s good pleasure to give you the kingdom.” May this precious gift be ours !



## The Three Doves.

“Estote quasi columba nidificans in summo ore foraminis.”  
“Be like the dove that maketh her nest in the sides of  
the hole’s mouth.”—*Jer. xlviij. 28.*

### I.

N the language of the Holy Spirit the dove is an image of the faithful soul, and what figure can be more applicable to the soul,—timid as she is like a dove,—simple and pure as a dove, —loving as a dove,—swift as a dove to take her flight towards the things that are above? Hence it is that we so often find this symbol in the pages of Holy Scripture. Thus the Spouse of the Canticles, speaking to her well-beloved, says, “Come, my dove, to the clefts of the rock.” *Cant. ii. 14.* The prophet Jeremiah, addressing the inhabitants of Moab, counsels them thus: “Oh ye that dwell in Moab, leave the cities, and dwell in the rock,” *Jer. xlviij. 28.* and be like the dove that maketh her nest in the

sides of the hole's mouth." And again, the royal Psalm iv. 6. prophet says, "Oh, that I had wings like a dove, that I might flee away and be at rest."

We may consider these three doves as a figure of one and the same soul, which, after their example, ought successively to "hide herself in the depths of the rock," to "build her nest on the summit of the rock," i.e., "in the sides of the hole's mouth" (auth. vers.), and lastly, "to fly away and be at rest."

But what is signified by this mysterious language, which speaks of the clefts of the rock where the dove hides herself, and its lofty summit where she fixes her nest, and this flight and repose?

Let us ask the Holy Spirit to explain to us these holy symbols, Who Himself deigned to take the form of a Dove, and of Whom it is written that "His conversation is with the simple." O Holy Dove, I accept Thy words, and would meditate upon them with trust and simplicity. I will meditate as a dove, *meditabor ut columba.*

## II.

The first image that is presented to us is that of the dove who hides herself in the clefts of the rock. Why flees she, and what does this refuge signify?

Why flees she ? Ah ! doubtless, having wandered far from tranquil spots, weak, and unable to resist, she finds herself surrounded by perils. A thousand snares are spread to entrap her. The vulture and the fowler piteously harass her. Nor has she been only weak, but imprudent too. Having loved danger, she has well-nigh perished. Not having mis-trusted the snares that were laid for her, she has succumbed to them. And being weak and imprudent, she has become guilty of sin : she is a dove enticed and led away, and in the seduction she has lost her heart, *columba seducta non habens cor.* Eccles. ii. 1.  
Hosea vii. 11.

What now shall she do ? Whither shall she go ? And who will save her ? Happily for her, when all are attacking and pursuing her, one still remains her friend ; and when she hears on all sides nothing but cries of death or words of seduction, one voice calls her, and says to her, " Come, my dove, take refuge in the clefts of the rock." Oh ! how sweet is that rock for her who is weak, and the clefts of the rock for her who needs shelter and repose ! Thither she flies for refuge ; there she hides her shame ; there she tends her wounds ; there she conceals herself from pursuit ; and there she sleeps, for she is weary.

What, then, does this dove signify, but the soul when, wandering in the midst of the world, and abandoned to her own caprices, she is forsaken of Thee, O God, Psalm xxvii.

Who art her Light and her Salvation ! Ah ! which of us, looking back upon the past, does not recognize in himself the wanderings of this dove, her wounds, and her griefs,—but wanderings more deadly, wounds more cruel, griefs more poignant ! Listen again to the royal psalmist, who borrows the language of this wounded dove :

Psalm cxvi. 3. “The snares of hell compassed me about, and the pains of death overtook me.” “The ungodly bend

Psalm xi. 2. their bow, and make ready their arrows within the quiver, that they may privily shoot at them which are true of heart.” So Jer. vi. 14. senseless are we that we cry, “Peace, peace, where there is no peace”; we love that which we ought to hate; and we precipitate ourselves into the snare like a bird, without knowing that it is at the deadly peril of our souls.

Oh, my God ! what will become of this soul ? Psalm cxxxix. 7. In her distress she says, “Whither shall I go, then, from Thy Spirit ; or whither shall I flee from Thy presence ? If I climb up into heaven Thou art there ; if I go down to hell Thou art there also.” Neither Heaven nor earth suit her : not Heaven, for she is guilty ; not earth, for she is miserable. She knew how to go astray, but she knows not how to return. She knew how to destroy herself, but she knows not how to save herself. Ah ! Thou Who hast taken pity on this dove, look upon her with mercy,

for Thou art the Friend of our souls. Yes ; He calls her. And what says He unto her ? No other words than these, "Come, My dove, hide thyself in the clefts of the rock." Wisdom xi. 26.

And the Rock, what is that ? The Apostle S. Paul tells us that Jesus Christ is the true Rock ; for "that Rock was Christ." And the clefts of the rock, what are they ? I Cor. x. 4. David teaches us, "They pierced my hands and my feet." Ah ! Psalm xxii. 17. now we may understand the true sense of these words, " Hide thyself in the clefts of the rock," i.e., Hide thyself in the deep wounds of Jesus crucified.

Oh ! how strong is that Divine rock ! how sweet are the clefts of that rock !. What shall I fear, since I have found shelter there ? If the hurricane rage around me I shall not fear, for that rock will resist the storm ; if the enemy pursue me I will laugh him to scorn, being hidden in the depths of that rock. In the clefts of that holy retreat my soul will forget her misery ; she will heal her wounds, and will exclaim, "If the Lord Himself had not been on my side Psalm cxxiv. 1. when men rose up against me, they would have swallowed me up." "Praised be the Lord, Who hath not given me over for a prey unto their teeth. My soul is escaped, even as a bird out of the snare of the fowler ; the snare is broken, and I am delivered. My help standeth

in the Name of the Lord, Who hath made heaven and earth."

### III.

So much for the refuge of the first dove. And now, what is the summit of the rock where the second dove builds her nest? It is that which the prophet proposes to our imitation, "Be like the dove that maketh her nest in Jer. xlvi. 28. the sides of the hole's mouth,—*Estote sicut columba nidificans in summo ore foraminis.*"

And first, seems there not in the one who takes refuge and hides herself, more of fear, and in the other who builds her nest, more of loving trust? The one hides herself trembling; the other sits down in peace on the top of the rock, and in the light of the sun. Both betake themselves to the Rock; but the first seems only to ask for a temporary asylum where she may recover her strength; the one seems to fix her abode irrevocably there. Or, if these two texts speak of the same dove, we may say that, at first, trembling and pursued, wounded and miserable, she has no ambition beyond the clefts of the rock; but as she gathers strength in her retreat, and feels that she can take her flight, she desires to rise to higher regions; she flies to the crest of the rock, and, finding there a fitting place for her nest, she establishes herself there, saying, "It is good for me to be here." Matt. xvii. 4.

What is meant, then, by this lofty spot? The royal psalmist again has suggested the explanation: "The sparrow," saith he, Ps. lxxxiv. 3. "hath found her an house, and the swallow a nest where she may lay her young; even Thy altars, O Lord of Hosts." As though he had said, "That which the house-top is to the sparrow, and the summit of the rock to the swallow, where she may build her nest, are Thy Altars to me, O Lord of Hosts." And so, "Leave the cities and dwell in the rock, and be like the dove that maketh her nest in the sides of the hole's mouth"; i.e., Leave the ways of the world! quit these lower regions of the earth, oh ye who are no longer of this world; let the dead bury their dead; but mount ye up to the lofty regions of God's Altar; it is there that your heart and your flesh shall rejoice; for "how amiable are thy dwellings, O Lord of Hosts." Matt. viii. 22. Ps. lxxxiv. 1.

Thus I love to picture to myself the lofty spot where the dove builds her nest as none other than the Altar of God. The Holy Eucharist is the summit of that rock,—of that rock which is Christ. If we consider, O Jesus, the love which Thou bearest unto us, the Holy Eucharist is the summit of Thy love; if we contemplate the graces that Thou pourest upon us, the Eucharist is the summit of Thy grace; if we speak of the joy which we possess in Thee, the Eucharist is

the summit of our joy. The Eucharist occupies the chiefest place in God's Church, the highest position upon the Altar. As the sparrow finds her an house, and the swallow a nest for her little family, Thy Altars, O Lord, my King and my God, are the summit where I long to fix my nest. For a long time, it is true, I did nothing but hide myself in the wounds of the Saviour, as in the clefts of a rock. I meditated on the sorrows of Jesus crucified ; I laved myself in His precious Blood. But, because I humbled myself in the depths of His Passion, I heard a Luke xiv. 10. voice saying unto me, "Friend, go up higher"; and I flew even to the summit of the rock. There is the nest that I desire ; there is the mountain where it is good Ps. cxxxii. 14. to rest ; there the habitation where I would dwell, for I have chosen it for ever.

#### IV.

Of the third dove the royal psalmist speaks, Ps. lv. 6. when he says, "Oh ! that I had wings like a dove, that I might flee away and be at rest." This dove asks neither a refuge nor a nest ; she takes wing, she flies, she reaches a repose that is not of this world. Doubtless, at the summit of the rock, she too found a fitting nest ; but there she was still upon earth ; Job v. 7. and, as a man is born to labour, so the bird is created to fly. Soon she feels

herself smitten with an intense desire for heaven. In the nest where she has been abiding her strength has increased, her wings have enlarged themselves. She takes wing, she flies, and returns not any more. Like that dove which Noah, at the end of the deluge, set free from the ark, she flew away Gen. viii. 12. and returned no more.

And what does this last image teach us, but the flight which the soul takes at last, when, separated from the body which holds her back, she fleeth unto Thee, O God, and seeketh repose upon Thy bosom ! Oh ! happy flight ! Oh ! blessed repose ! Ah ! doubtless the Eucharist is of more value than all that is upon the earth ; worth more than all its pleasures, and honours, and riches ; worth more than all the other gifts of God that we can receive in this life. But the Eucharist is not Heaven. It does but present to us Jesus Christ under a veil ; Heaven shews Him to us openly. The Eucharist requires faith as well as love ; Heaven demands of us love only. Who, then, shall give us wings that we may fly to Heaven and be at rest ? Ah ! let us not be troubled at the answer : It is Death, and Death only. Death, that is so full of anguish to the unbeliever, and so sweet a consolation to those who have chosen their habitation, and fixed their nest at the Altars of the Lord of Hosts.

Death gives us much more than it takes from

us ; it takes from us this passing world and its deceitful vanities, and its seductive pleasures ; but it gives us the wings of a dove, that we may fly away and be at rest.

## V.

Here, then, O my God, are the steps by which my soul must reach Thee : Thy Divine Wounds, Thy Eucharist, and Heaven. If the enemy pursue me, Thy Wounds ; if I would enjoy repose, Thy Eucharist ; and if I die, Heaven.

My God, I ask of Thee three things only ; do Thou refuse me not : a refuge, like the dove, in Thy Wounds ; a nest, like the dove, near Thy Tabernacle ; and finally, the repose of the dove, even that of Heaven.





## The Gift of God.

"Si scires donum Dei."

"If thou knewst the gift of God."—*John* iv. 10.



MONG the many words of mercy which our Blessed Saviour pronounced, one of the most striking that the Gospels have handed down to us is that which He addressed to the woman of Samaria at the beginning of that long conversation upon which we have all so often meditated : " If thou knewst the gift of God." These words exhibit not only a touching goodness and burning interest for her poor soul, but also an exquisite grace and a marvellous knowledge of the Divine art of converting souls. " If thou knewst the gift of God." Christ does not reveal this gift at once to the woman, but He causes her, as it were, to foresee its charms ; He doth not reproach her with ignorance of it, but He makes her understand that, did she know it, she would love it ; and did she love it, she would be saved.

We may well imagine that both the gesture and the voice of our Blessed Lord carried with them on this occasion an air of inspiration which seemed to say, "It is thy God Who speaketh with thee; hesitate not; for now is the accepted time, now is the day of salvation; learn to know the gift of God."

"If thou knewst the gift of God." If thou knewst that this gift is peace; if thou knewst that this gift is the consolation for all thy troubles, the pardon of all thy faults, the support of all thy weakness; if thou knewst that this gift is even Myself, the joy of angels, and the salvation of men. . . . But not only art thou ignorant of this gift; I know also that thou art weak, light-hearted, the slave of thy passions, careless of thy real good. . . . Oh! how to offer the gift of God without thy rejecting it! how to make thee taste of it without thy spurning it! how to place it before thee without thy resisting it! . . . If thou hadst already taken thy part in it, if thou hadst already tasted of that good thing which I am offering to thee, if thou knewst already the gift of God!

Thoughts such as these doubtless filled the heart of Christ. And are not these words of the Saviour to the woman of Samaria the same that day after day are spoken by God's priests and by His faithful people to the frivolous and the worldly multitude among whom we live? Habits of levity and dissipation have sealed their souls

and spirits against all serious thought ; the sensuality of their lives makes them incapable of appreciating the inner beauty of the daughter of Sion ; and notwithstanding that their most sacred interests are at stake, and their salvation in peril, their life flows on in worldly current, and death sooner or later overtakes them. What zeal can ever reach them ? Their language differs from ours so much, their thoughts are so little our thoughts ; and above all, their love is not as ours. What course shall we take with them ? What shall we do ? What shall we say ? Ah ! When God's providence throws them in our path, terrified as we are at the future they are preparing for themselves, longing as we do to make them partakers of the blessings which Christianity has bestowed upon ourselves, we watch for the moment when a word from our lips shall be least galling to them ; and the first words we venture to address to them are those of Christ to the Samaritan woman, "If thou knewst the gift of God."

This, above all, is our language to the world when we wish to speak of the Holy Eucharist, that most excellent gift of God, to which we may apply our Lord's words, "All men cannot receive this saying." It is here, Matt. xix. 11. above all, that we speak a language that is not of this world, and how then shall the world comprehend it ? the world, that has never tasted the sweetness of the Saviour in that most

Holy Sacrament ; while we, on the other hand, know that which surpasses all the world's riches and all the world's charms ! We know how the Eucharist, frequently and faithfully received, has made the scales to fall from our eyes, and has placed us in the choicest communion with the clearest truth of God. We know, that, if our heart was hard, the Eucharist has little by little made it soft ; that if our passions were ardent, the Eucharist has refreshed our senses ; we know that one moment spent before God's Altar has been of more value to us than many years in the tents of ungodliness. We know, Ps. lxxxiv. 11. that, if the joys of the world are bitter, and its dissipations wearying, to hold converse with Christ in the Holy Eucharist is ever without bitterness, and life in His Presence knows no satiety.

Wisdom viii. 19. We know that the same God Who condescends to accept an earthly habitation at our hands will not refuse us a dwelling-place in the Heaven of Heavens. And knowing all this, we are never weary of speaking of the delights of God's Altar. But to speak of all this to the world, how difficult it is ! our tongue cleaves to the roof of our mouth. O Lord, if Thou wouldest send me into the world to make it know and love the Blessed Eucharist, I will employ not mine own language, but Thine ; I will remember Thy conversation with the woman of Samaria ; I will borrow Thy expressions, Thy voice, if possible,

and above all Thy heart ; and in endeavouring to make those to whom Thou sendest me comprehend what it is they are losing by ignoring this Sacrament of Thy love, and what it is that they would gain by knowing Thee, I will say to them Thy words, " If thou knewest the gift of God."

## II.

But Jesus Christ did not stop here ; He continued His conversation with the woman, and led her on by little and little to recognize and adore Him as the true Messiah. Let us follow step by step that Divine Wisdom which sweetly disposeth all things, and see whether It will not point out to us the way to make the world appreciate the Divine gift of the Holy Eucharist.

When Christ addressed this woman He seemed at first only to claim from her an office of charity. She, as S. Augustine observes, did not answer by a refusal ; far from it ; but what hindered her from immediately executing Christ's demands was a sentiment of humility, the thought of her own unworthiness. " How is it," she said, " that Thou, being a Jew, askest drink of me, which am a woman of Samaria ? " And here she exhibits a great virtue, the virtue of humble charity ! Christ, Who reads the heart, knew that her will was good ; and since a cup of cold water given in His Name is not without its reward, He

will reward this woman. The good instincts that He finds in her are the seed that He will cause to spring up from the material charity that she is willing to bestow upon Him; and He raises her to a higher thought, that of spiritual charity, which He alone can bestow. She was disposed to give Him a few drops of water from the well of Jacob, and, behold, He thus addresses her, "If thou knewst Who it is that saith to thee, Give Me to drink, thou wouldest have asked of Him, and He would have given thee Living Water. The water which thou drawest from this earthly source quencheth not the thirst ; but whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst ; for the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life." The Samaritan woman understood that the proffered gift of the Saviour was of greater value than her own ; and forgetting the water of the well of Jacob in that which He promised, she cries, "Sir, give me this water."

### III.

Let us pause now, and see whether the world should not have profited already by the conduct of the Saviour with regard to this woman.

The world, enveloped as it is in the thick darkness of material things, is little capable of practising the heroic virtues of Christianity. Chastity, mortification of the senses, renouncement of self,

are almost unknown to it ; but there remains at all events one virtue to which it is no stranger, and that is charity towards the poor. Every day we may see worldly men, smitten with the vanities of the age, and uninitiated in the holy practices of Christianity, consecrating some part of their life to works of charity, helping the infant in its cradle, the orphan in the asylum, the aged on the bed of sickness. This purely material charity is far indeed from being sufficient, far from being sufficient to the poor who live not by bread alone, far from being sufficient <sup>Matt. iv. 4</sup> to the soul itself of the charitable one ; for it is a small thing to love the poor if one does not love God, and it is a small thing to serve the poor if one does not serve God. And yet even these works have gone up as prayers to Heaven on behalf of those who have done them, and their works of charity will not be fruitless. How then shall they be recompensed ?

Jesus Christ teaches us in His Gospel that it is Himself, in this child or this poor man, that our charity has nourished, clothed, visited, <sup>Matt. xxv. 35.</sup> or consoled. What hinders us, then, from supposing that it is Jesus Christ Himself Who, under this appearance, presents Himself every day to the charitable hearts of the world, saying to them, as aforetime to the woman of Samaria, " Give me the bread of which I have need "? And if their charity refuse Him not, why should He be less prodigal towards these

souls than He was to the Samaritan? Why shall He not say to them, as to her, " If thou knewst Who it is that speaketh with thee, thou wouldest ask of Me to eat, and I would give thee the Bread of Life : that which thou offerest Me can-not satiate My hunger ; but that which I will give thee is nourishment Divine, springing up into everlasting life "? And why should not the world be moved with the same desire at this Divine language, and answer as she did, " Sir, give me this bread "? Ah ! if it were so, charity would have caused the world to take the first step towards the Holy Eucharist.

## IV.

But the holy desire which the Samaritan woman manifests, the fruit of her charity, is not enough to put in her possession of the gift of God ; she still opposes two obstacles which separate her from it invincibly : the corruption of the heart and ignorance of spirit.

The corruption of the heart. When Jesus Christ, in order to unveil her to herself and to compel her to a confession, bids her call her husband, she says, " I have no husband " ; and then searching the darkness of this evil conscience, and disclosing the hideous wound which was

Ps. xxxii. 3. consuming her through her silence, He replies, " Thou hast well said, I have no husband ; for thou hast had five hus-

bands, and he whom thou now hast is not thy husband." How should so grievous a sinner know the gift of God?

It matters not : though she has sinned much, yet if her repentance be sincere, all her faults shall be forgiven her ; though she has so much offended God, yet if she now love Him much, she shall be freely pardoned. The revealing of her sins has vanquished her. She inclines not her heart to evil words to excuse herself for her guilt; on the contrary, she Ps. cxli. 4. recognizes the power of Him Who speaks with her ; "Sir," she says, "I perceive that Thou art a Prophet."

But to the impurity of her life there is still added her ignorance. Imbued with the errors of the sect to which she belongs, or perhaps foolishly thinking to convince of error Him Who had so lately convinced her of sin, she would enter into controversy with the Saviour : "Our fathers worshipped in this mountain ; and ye say, that in Jerusalem is the place where men ought to worship." Here again how far is she from knowing the gift of God.

But Jesus, the Good Shepherd, loses not sight of His wandering sheep ; He follows them along all the paths where they lose themselves, as well as among the brambles where they tear themselves ; and He despairs not to instruct this soul after having purified her, by placing before her the lofty principles of true religion : causing her to

Ps. xxxvi. 9. see light in His Divine light, even in  
 Himself ; "Believe Me," He replies, "the hour cometh when ye shall neither in this mountain, nor yet at Jerusalem, worship the Father ; the hour cometh, and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth ; God is a Spirit ; and they that worship Him must worship Him in spirit and in truth."

The Samaritan woman listens with docility to these words as she had to the former with humility. Her spirit opens to the light, even as her heart had opened to repentance ; and as in the Revealer of her sins she had recognized a Prophet, so in Him Who instructs her she seems to see the Teacher of the world. And, because

Gal. iii. 8. without faith in the Divine Messiah none can be justified or saved, be-  
 Heb. xi. 6. cause without faith it is impossible to please God, or to receive His gifts, the Samaritan hesitates not ; in the name of the believing Jew as well as of the Gentiles whom she represents, and to confound at the same time in the ages to come all unbelieving Jews, she proclaims in the face of the sun the belief which she has received with all her people ; "I know that Messias cometh which is called Christ : when He is come, He will tell us all things." Christ waited only for these words to manifest Himself wholly unto her. "Ah ! well," said He, "this Messias, this Christ, this Teacher of the world :—I that speak unto thee am He."

Happy and blessed soul ! She knows now the gift of God ; she possesses it ; and because she has chosen it, it shall never be taken away from her. Luke x. 42.

## V.

Let us return now to the world which this woman of Samaria represents. Already, it is true, the exercise of charity has awakened a desire for the Eucharist ; but, like the Samaritan, the world opposes two obstacles to the possession of this gift of God, obstacles of the heart and of the spirit.

The obstacle of the heart, which, without being utterly perverted, is scarcely ever pure enough for Eucharistic joys. It is the pure heart which has for its friend the Divine King of our Altars. It is the pure heart which climbs the holy mountain and dwells in the tabernacle. Prov. xxii. 11.

The world abandons itself to its unholy delights ; it suffers itself to be ruled by self-love and by its senses ; it indulges itself in offences of which Jesus Christ has said, " Woe unto the world because of offences ! " Matt. xviii. 7.

How then shall it love the Holy Eucharist ? What concord hath Christ with Belial ? What agreement hath the temple of God with idols ? Can we drink at the same time of the cup of the Lord and of the cup of devils ? 2 Cor. vi. 15  
1 Cor. x. 21

But that is not all. The depravity of the world envelops its understanding in darkness; levity enchanteth it, and obscures the heavenly vision; the bewitching of naughtiness  
Wisd iv. 12. doth obscure things that are honest. For the truth is like God, Who suffers Himself not to be seen but by the pure in heart. The spirit of the world comprehends not the spirit of the Gospel; for to him who attaches himself to the maxims of the age, Christianity becomes as a sealed book, and his intelligence having no guide, wanders from error into doubt, and from doubt into indifference, and cannot know the gift of God.

Here then is a double obstacle, and how shall it be removed?

We have seen that Jesus Christ hides Himself under the appearance of the poor, to ask of the world material bread, and to promise it in return the bread of heaven. Well! does He not present Himself every day under the figure of His minister, who is the priest? He sits, as aforetime, at the edge of Jacob's well, which is at once the symbol of the pool where all our stains are washed away and of the truth whence flow the waves of the Divine Word; and there He awaits the poor Samaritans who come to draw water from earthly sources.

Oh, worldly souls, whoever you may be, if you meet the priest in your ways, listen to him as the Samaritan woman listened to Christ. The priest

reads not, as Christ did, the depth of the conscience ; but he will attend you patiently ; and if you lay at his feet the confession of your faults, if you break the silence which aggravates them, and which hinders them from being pardoned, he will embrace you with such paternal tenderness, he will so mingle his sorrow with yours, and the advice he will give you will be so wise and prudent, and the words he will speak to you will be so full of consolation to you in your troubles, that you, even you, will be forced to say to him, "Sir, I perceive that thou art a prophet."

Then will he cause the Truth to penetrate your ears,—that Truth which he has received to transmit to you ; he will instruct you in our Divine precepts that are ever so sweet even when one thinks them hard ; he will preach to you the Cross that is always so wise, even in its foolishness ; he will enlighten you in our Mysteries which are obscure only because they are on a level with God's intelligence and not yours. Above all, he will initiate you into the mystery of the Holy Eucharist, and will say unto you, "The hour cometh, and now is, since eighteen centuries, that the true worshippers worship Jesus Christ on all the altars in the world ; for it is He Himself Who, on the evening of His death, took bread into His hands, and said, "This is My Body." What Body, if not the flesh of which it is written, "The Word was made Flesh and dwelt among

Matt. xxvi. 26.  
John i. 14

us"? What Word, if not that of which it is John i. 1. said, "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was God"? "This is My Body." "The Word was made Flesh." "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was God." Either these three sentences of the Gospel are a lie, or Jesus Christ is present upon the Altar.

Ah! I do not despair, that, absolved by the hands of the priest, instructed by his words, you, whoever you may be, will fall down at the foot of the altar, and say, with full assurance of faith, "I know that the Divine Messiah, even Jesus Christ, is there." If such be your dispositions, advance towards Him, fear nothing, receive Him in the Holy Communion, and then I say to you in truth, you will possess the gift of God,—and when, returning home, you feel a joy unknown before, a peace which was not yours, and a happiness which will seem to you like a foretaste of Heaven, you will not be surprised at it, but will say, "Now indeed I know the gift of God."

## VI.

There is another saying in the Gospel recorded of our Blessed Lord analogous to that of which we are speaking, but which, instead of giving joy and hope to the soul, saddens and terrifies it. It is that which Christ pronounced over Jerusalem, a little before His Passion, when He wept over it,

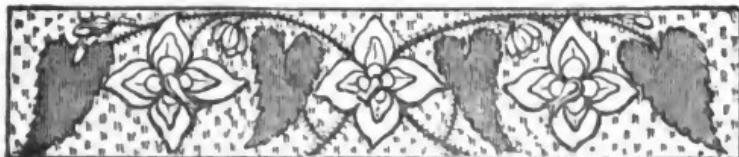
and said, "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, how often would I have gathered thy children together, as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not. If thou hadst known, even thou, at least in this thy day, the things that belong unto thy peace : but now are they hid from thine eyes." "If thou hadst known the things that belong unto thy peace." Is it not as if He had said, "If thou knewst the gift of God"? But the conduct of Jerusalem was very different from that of the Samaritan woman. When Jesus Christ, fatigued with the travail of His life and the torments of His Passion, stopped upon Calvary, and from the Cross asked a second time for drink, saying, "I thirst," Jerusalem, instead of drawing for Him water from the fountain, offered Him vinegar and gall ; instead of saying with repentance and with confidence, "I perceive that Thou art a Prophet," struck Him upon the face with those insulting words, "If Thou art a prophet, prophesy unto us, who is he that smote Thee." Matt. xxvi. 68.

Instead of prostrating herself at His feet, and adoring Him with the words, "I know that Thou art the Christ, the Son of the Living God," Jerusalem nailed Him to a Cross, and had the audacity to say unto Him, "If He be the King of Israel, let Him now come down from the Cross, and we will believe Him." Matt. xxvii. 42.

And so Christ, while casting around Him a look of pity, and yet of just indignation, pronounced her sentence, "Now are they hid from thine eyes : thine enemies shall cast a trench about thee, and compass thee around, and lay thee even with the ground, and thy children within thee, and they shall not leave in thee one stone upon another ! "

O world ! world ! world ! Wilt thou imitate Jerusalem instead of the Samaritan woman ? How often has Jesus Christ desired to gather thy children under His Divine wings, and thou wouldest not ! How often has He offered thee peace, and thou hast rejected it ! But beware ! The threatened time is at hand : seest thou not the hostile armies already casting a trench around thee ? Seest thou not that they threaten thee in that which thou holdest most sacred ? Thy society is falling to pieces, and not one stone is left upon another. Make then thy choice. Choose between the gift of God and thine own ruin. Choose between the gift of God and slavery. O world ! world ! world ! wilt thou hesitate still, and shall no one lead thee to know, to prefer, and to taste the gift of God ?





## The Hidden God.

“Vere Tu es Deus absconditus ;  
Deus Israel Salvator.”

“Verily, Thou art a God that hidest Thyself, O God of Israel, the Saviour.”—*Isaiah xlvi. 15.*



MONG the mysteries of Christianity there is one more obscure perhaps, and yet sweeter, than all the rest. One might call it a profound night ; and yet its splendour illuminates me in the midst of the sweetest delights. *Nox illuminatio mea in deliciis meis.*

One might call it the most impenetrable silence, and yet this it is of which it is written, “O, how sweet are Thy words unto my throat ; yea, sweeter than honey unto my mouth.” *Quam dulcia faucibus meis eloquia tua, super mel et favum.* Ps. cxix. 103.

One might call it the stillness of death ; and yet it is a life so Divine that he who possesses it cries out, “It is not I that live, but Christ liveth in me.” *Vivo jam non ego, vivit vero in me Christus.* Gal. ii. 20.

This mystery is the Holy Eucharist, and of it the Prophet Isaiah has said, "Verily, Thou art a God that hidest Thyself, O God the Saviour." *Vere tu es Deus absconditus, Deus Salvator.*

But it seems as if the more this God sought to hide from us His glory, the more I try to solve the mystery where so much sweetness is hidden ; the more obscure the Eucharist is, the more am I pleased to adorn it with lights and bright flowers and precious metals ; the more silent the Eucharist is, the more I surround it with songs of joy ; the more profound the secret of my faith, the more I ask my love to reveal it to all hearts.

What then is this secret ? I come to-day, O my Saviour, I come as a little child, nourished by this hidden bread as by his mother's milk, to ask Thee why there is so much mystery in nourishment so sweet ? and why such sweetness in a mystery so obscure ?

It is the Holy Eucharist which Itself doth answer me : Pay no attention to My obscurity ; the sun has darkened Me. "Look not upon Cant. i. 6. me, because I am black, because the sun hath looked upon me." *Nolite me considerare quod fusca sum, quia decoloravit me sol.*

What sun, if not, as S. Bernard explains it, the fire of love ? "To be darkened by the sun is to be on fire with love." *Decolorari a sole est ignescere charitate.*

Yes, it is true indeed ; it is for love that Jesus Christ hides Himself in the Holy Eucharist ; but I ask again why the love of Jesus Christ leads Him to hide Himself beneath these veils ?

I ask this, but instead of pursuing the question, I ought to leave to each soul the charge of answering it for herself ; for each one knows at the bottom of her heart why the love of Jesus Christ has prepared for her the Eucharist : she knows it, and that is her deepest and sweetest secret. *Secretum meum mihi, secretum meum.* Isa. xxiv. 16.

Yet I will say, nevertheless, what I think of it ; and yet I would that my words were but the echo of the pious thoughts of the loving soul.

## II.

If Jesus Christ hides Himself in the Eucharist it is, in my opinion, first, in order that He may dwell more intimately within us : secondly, in order that He may work more effectually in us : and thirdly, in order that He may reveal Himself manifestly within us.

i. In order that He may dwell more intimately within us.

That which surely rules the moral world, and assigns to humanity its true character of greatness, is the association of man with God. Man separated from God,—what is he ? His body is like the grass of the field, which to day is, and to-

morrow is cut down ; his soul is as a breath that passeth away ; his life as a light vapour that is soon dispersed. United to God, on the other hand, man is raised and elevated ; his soul is the image of the Godhead ; his body, his organs, his senses, are the faithful and docile servants of the soul, helping to maintain and develop its faculties. Between man and God the bonds of union are firm and reciprocal. Man, at his birth, proceeds from the hands of God ; at his death he returns to the bosom of God ; there is the beginning and the end. His life is passed between these two boundaries : it is the route which leads from God to God. Consequently his first duty is to remain firmly united to Him from Whom he came, and towards Whom he is going. But at the same time the immeasurable goodness of God consists in favouring this union, in bringing man back when he swerves from it, and in binding him to it, more and more, by discovering to him His love. Religion is nothing else than the history of these Divine purposes.

From the beginning of the world the Eternal Word enters into relation with man ; He communicates Himself to man's intelligence ; He instructs him in the truths which he ought to believe, and the virtues which he ought to practise ; yet He does not at all times come down to him, but dwells above his head in the height of Heaven. He is not yet for man the hidden bread that unites itself to him ; but rather the

Lord, at whose presence the hills melted like wax,  
and the fire from out of the bramble      Ps. xxix. v.  
that devoureth the cedars of Lebanon.

He is the God of whom it is written, "The Lord is a great God: and a great King above all gods."      Ps. xcv. 3.

But this first bond of union is not alone sufficient for His love. Having dwelt for a long time above us, He would now dwell with us; He becomes Incarnate, and is made man. Oh, how much closer this bond, how much sweeter this union! And why sweeter? Because, in becoming Incarnate, the Godhead did two things, equally necessary to us and equally sweet: hiding Itself, and yet drawing near to us. Had God drawn near without hiding Himself, my eyes would have been blinded; had He separated Himself from us in hiding Himself, I should have known Him less, and should have forgotten to love Him; but He both hides Himself, and draws near to us. He hides Himself; and being better able thus to contemplate Him, I rejoice in the shadow of His concealment: He draws near, and my soul cleaves more closely to Him. "Under the shadow of Thy wings will I rejoice; my soul cleaveth unto Thee."      Ps. lxii. 9.

*In velamento alarum tuarum exultabo: adhaesit anima mea post te.*

O sacred veil of the Incarnation; O adorable body of my Saviour; O Divine hands that have so often pressed me; O Divine feet that have run

after me ; oh sacred heart that so loved me ; how dear are ye to me ! "The Lord was great," says S. Bernard, "and already worthy of all our praises : in becoming Incarnate He made Himself small, and altogether lovely." *Magnus Dominus et laudabilis nimis, parvus Dominus et amabilis nimis.*

In His birth at Bethlehem, or asleep on Mary's knees, He seems to me less great than in His unspeakable generation ; and therefore do I love Him. At work with S. Joseph in the carpenter's shop at Nazareth, He seems to me *less* than when He made the world with His Divine hands ; and therefore do I love Him. Served by Martha, and loved and adored by Mary in the house of Lazarus, He seems to me *less* than when dwelling in the Heavens, served by the angels, and adored by the Seraphim ; and therefore I love Him. Sad and Suffering in His Passion, and dying on a Cross, He seems to me less than when living and rejoicing with His Father and the Holy Spirit from everlasting ; and therefore do I love Him. *Parvus Dominus et amabilis nimis.*

But if Jesus Christ hides Himself so deeply in the Incarnation, how can He hide Himself more ? If He comes so near to me by taking flesh like mine, how can He approach nearer ? He will do so, however, and this is the last discovery of His love. He hides Himself, but it is under the appearance of my daily bread ; He draws near even to become my daily food. He

makes Himself still less, and is therefore still more to be beloved. *Parvus Dominus et amabilis nimis.* Less under the form of bread than under the figure of a man ; less in the Tabernacle than at Bethlehem ; less on the Altar than on the Cross ; least, above all, in my heart. My heart : there is the cradle where He rests, the workshop where He toils, the place where He dwells, the Calvary where He sacrifices Himself, the sepulchre where He is buried ; in no place makes He Himself so small as in my heart ; and therefore in no place do I love Him more. *Parvus Dominus et amabilis nimis.*

And this intimate union which He contracts with me in the Eucharist, He contracts equally with all those who approach the Holy Table. His mortal life was confined within the limits of a narrow straitened region, and within the brief space of thirty-three years : His Eucharistic life extends from pole to pole, and lasts as long as the world endures. During His mortal life very few people saw Him, very few approached Him, or received Him into their house : His Eucharistic life belongs to all men ; from age to age the generations pass away, and each succeeding one, as it peoples the world, finds ever the God of the Eucharist in the Tabernacle and on the Altar. This God, so profoundly hidden, is also He Who unites Himself so intimately with us : a hidden God ; but God the Saviour. *Deus absconditus, Deus Salvator.*

## III.

2. Jesus Christ hides Himself, in order that He may work more effectually within us.

For Jesus Christ comes not but to work : our heart is not for Him a throne of ease, which He chooses for His repose ; He reposes there, but it is to transform it ; He sojourns there, but it is to improve it ; and He enters not  
Acts x. 38. but to do good ; He goes about there doing good.

Let us see then how the Eucharist becomes for Him so powerful a means of working. Between the operations of God and the operations of man there is this difference, that man ordinarily works upon man only by external means ; and the stronger the means, the more powerful the operation : the work of God, on the other hand, is the more energetic the more hidden and internal it is. God acts doubtless upon man by external and visible operation, and by the succession of the events of this world : He acts also upon man by His Word, which He causes him to hear, and by the holy examples which He puts before his eyes. But these external operations are as nothing unless the internal and hidden action animates them and gives them life. This action is that of grace. It has pleased the goodness of God to hide the richest treasures of His grace, under the sensible sign of

the Eucharistic bread, and to enclose there His richest means of operation. And therefore the Eucharist has always been the most life-giving service in the Church for the sanctification of the faithful. It is this which has made in all ages Martyrs, Confessors, and Virgins. It is thence that we draw the richest treasures of God ; this which teaches us the highest virtues ; under the silent veils which conceal it is a unique eloquence which human language cannot attain unto, teaching us Divine secrets which escape the powers of human speech.

Pious souls, whoever ye be, I fear not to address these questions to you : Before knowing and tasting the Eucharist, what did you know ? and since you have become familiar with It, of what are you ignorant ? Before being inebriated with that wine which maketh glad the Virgins, did you know chastity ? Before being nourished with that mystical bread wherein God annihilates Himself, did you know humility ? Before being united to the Divine Victim of Calvary, did you know patience ? Before having taken part in the feast of love, did you know charity ? But since the Eucharist has become your habitual food, of what Divine teaching are you ignorant ? in what counsels of the Gospel, even the most difficult, are you uninstructed ? in what steps, even the loftiest, by which holy souls go on from virtue to virtue, may you not learn to tread ? Baptism indeed makes us Christians, and Confirmation

perfect Christians ; but the Eucharist alone will make us saints.

But at the same time that the Eucharist teaches us everything, how sweet and lovely is its teaching ! how easy does it render the accomplishment of our duty ! You can easily recognize a soul that the Eucharist has taught.

In truth I am sometimes tempted to think that there are two kinds of Christianity : one wherein the commandments are always hard, the yoke always difficult, the burden always heavy ; and another wherein the precepts are always smooth, the yoke always easy, the burden always light. The former is the Christianity of those who know not the Eucharist, and the latter is that of the pious and faithful who love and frequent It.

Put yourself, if you will, in the presence of two souls,—the one loving the Eucharist, the other not loving It ; put the same precept, the same counsel, the same virtue, the same work, before them ; where the latter will hesitate, the former will hesitate not ; where the latter will walk with stumbling steps, the former will fly ; where the latter will run aground, the former will advance full sail to port. See then the power of the Eucharist ! a power which It owes to the interior and hidden grace that It sheds within us.

A hidden and mysterious God is truly then what Thou art, Who art the Saviour of our souls. “A hidden God, God the Saviour.” *Deus absconditus, Deus Salvator.*

## IV.

3. Lastly, Jesus Christ hides Himself in the Eucharist, only to reveal Himself in us.

The Eucharist is assuredly a profound mystery ; the Christian's lively faith can alone penetrate the thick darkness, and contemplate the Eternal under the form of bread ; but side by side with the mystery I find the revelation of it ; Jesus Christ hides Himself under the veils of the Sacrament, but He reveals Himself in each one of us who receive this Sacrament ; and He seems to annihilate Himself only that He may live again in each one of us, and multiply in the person of each Christian the manifestation of His works.

We have seen already that Jesus Christ came upon earth only to unite Himself more intimately with us, and by consequence of this union to make us partakers of His nature. He has willed to live again in all Christians, who are His children, in order that as the old Adam perpetuates Himself in all men (for all are sinners), He, who is the new Adam, may in like manner perpetuate Himself in all generations of Christians, redeemed and sanctified by Him. And it is in the Eucharist, above all, that Jesus Christ attains this end.

"There is this difference," says a Father, "between material bread, which nourishes the body, and the Eucharistic food : that the former, inferior in dignity to the man whom it nourishes,

is transformed into his substance ; while the Eucharistic bread, more noble than the soul which receives It, attracts the soul, so to speak, to Itself, and transforms it into Itself." So the material bread *becomes us*, and, on the contrary, by receiving the Eucharist *we become* Jesus Christ. But Jesus Christ hides Himself beneath the Eucharistic veils, and *they becoming Himself*, it is our duty to manifest and exhibit Him.

Let us consider what it is that this mystery hides from us of the Divine Saviour as He was in His mortal life ; and this will be precisely what we ought to make manifest in ourselves.

When Jesus Christ appeared in the world He there manifested Himself by His outward form, by His words, and by His acts. But in the Eucharist there is nought of this outward form, nor of these words or actions ; these then are what we must reproduce in ourselves.

First, the outward appearance of the Saviour was so lovely and so sweet, that to express the Incarnation the Apostle could use only these simple words, "The Love of God Titus iii. 4. appeared."

When Jesus Christ showed Himself, an indefinable charm attracted all to Him ; one single look of His determined the Apostles to follow Him, and led Simon Peter to repentance. In fine, they accused Him of seducing the people John vii. 12. whom He would convert. "He deceiveth the people."

Who shall grant us to reproduce in ourselves this sweet form of Jesus Christ, so that the world, when it sees us, shall say in like manner, "The love of God appears"? Truly, the piety of a soul that is devoted to the Eucharist ought to be above all things lovely. Its modesty, like a new robe, should be so full of charms that it attracts all men unto it. Wherever it is it should shed a perfume of virtue like the <sup>2 Cor. ii. 15.</sup> sweet savour of Jesus Christ.

In the second place, we must reproduce His words: those words which transformed the world, and preached the highest truths to man's intelligence, and exhibited the loftiest morality to his heart. The Eucharist keeps silence. Doubtless its very silence is eloquent, as we have seen. But It has only an interior language for the soul: it is our part to cause the inner words of our Divine Master to resound abroad. Priests and people, all are Apostles. We all owe to our brethren that holy conversation which animates and consoles, and causes truth to penetrate into the spirit, and virtue into the heart. It is to the Priest above all, however, that the ministry of the Word is entrusted; and I do not forget it, but rather thank the Lord that He has entrusted to me at the same time the ministration of the Eucharist. Yes, it is because the priest goes up every day to the Altar that he can every day occupy the pulpit of truth: it is because he every day holds God in his hands that he becomes at the same time His

most faithful interpreter : it is because the Eucharist is on his lips, like the burning coal of Isaiah, that his heart is pure enough to preach the Gospel. Happy the priest who in preaching it can say with the royal prophet, " My heart is inditing of a good matter." *Eru-*  
*Ps. xliv. 1. tavit cor meum verbum bonum.*

Thirdly, and lastly : We must reproduce the actions of Jesus Christ : actions which were but the highest virtues. The Eucharist conceals a God Who ever showed Himself to the world humble, chaste, patient, loving. Now this Divine life lies buried in this mystery ; but the mystery awaits a revelation ; and what is that ? It is the life of each one of us. It is not enough that the Eucharist should act upon our soul and sanctify Matt. v. 16. it ; the world also must see our good works, and glorify our Father which is in Heaven.

No words can better express what I mean than those borrowed from Holy Scripture : " It is good to keep close the secret of Tobit xii. 17. a king, but it is honourable to reveal the works of God."

The secret of the king, and the works of God ; the Eucharist is contained in these two words. The secret is entrusted to us with its inexpressible sweetness ; let us preserve it as a precious thing at the bottom of our heart, and fear lest this hidden flower, if it blossom in the height of day, shall lose somewhat of its freshness and its per-

fume ; but let us remember, at the same time, that the Eucharist obliges us to reveal the works of God. The sum of these works constitutes the Christian life, and on leaving the Holy Table that life ought to shine forth in us clearly and brightly.

Oh, how important is this doctrine ! How I wish it were more often meditated upon ! The Eucharist is a mystery ; the life and virtues of each Christian are the revelation of this mystery. And he who believes not, nor sees in the Sacrament of the Altar anything but a little bread, should be constrained to recognize and adore God in those who receive this Sacrament : that, admiring in each one of us a goodness ever indulgent, an unalterable sweetness, a burning charity, he may say, This is another Jesus Christ ; no longer Jesus Christ hidden, but such as He appeared to the world. *Christianus alter Christus.*

## V.

Let us then love this hidden God, this mystical food, since it unites us directly with Jesus Christ. Let us delight in Him, since He acts with so much power upon our souls : but above all, let us never forget that the more Jesus Christ hides Himself and annihilates Himself here, the more we ought to reproduce Him in ourselves.

The Christian is another Christ. *Christianus alter Christus.*

Thus, after being shewn forth in our lives on earth by the practice of Christian virtues, this Divine Saviour will reveal Himself to us and in us for ever by the gift of His glory in Heaven.





## The Prodigal Son.

“Fame pereo.”

“I perish with hunger.”—*S. Luke xv. 17.*

**C**HO has not read and meditated at length upon the parable of the Prodigal Son? Who has not shed tears over the wanderings of this poor child? and who has not rejoiced at his return to happiness? But above all, who has not thanked Jesus Christ from the bottom of his heart for having let fall from His lips such Divine words, to teach repentance to every sinner, and indulgence to all those to whom sinners betake themselves?

I was meditating upon this touching history; but it was, I must tell you, at the steps of the Altar; and there, when I asked myself whence came the misery of this younger son, it seemed to me that his fault was principally in leaving the humble table of his father, and going to live amid more luxury, and giving himself up more to his carnal appetites. And when I looked to see

how this prodigal in his misery expressed the horrors of the condition to which he had brought himself, I heard him utter this cry of anguish, "I perish with hunger." *Fame pereo.* Lastly, when I examined how the father received his son after he had pardoned his sins, I saw that he had prepared for him the fatted calf, and admitted him to a splendid feast.

What further needed I to comprehend that in this Gospel story there was another account of the Divine Eucharist?

But it is true, O Lord, that each time I read Thy holy Scriptures this thought never entirely leaves me. The Eucharist ! it is ever before my eyes : I discover it in every page of Holy Writ. The language which recalls it to me is that which I know the best : the words which point to it are those on which I love to meditate ; or rather in reading, I neither seek nor ask whether the Eucharist be there or here, but each of those Divine pages is to me as a transparent crystal through which I ever see the Eucharist.

## II.

Let us try to develop the thoughts which have thus suggested themselves to me in the Parable of the Prodigal Son.

"A certain man had two sons ; and the younger of them said to his father, Father, give me the portion of goods that falleth to me. And

he divided unto them his living. And not many days after, the younger son gathered all together, and took his journey into a far country." Luke xv.

Before following him on this long journey, let us contemplate him first in his father's house.

Was he not happy there? The Gospel narrative tells us that there he "was ever with" his father, and "all that he had was" his; there even "the hired servants" had "bread enough and to spare." And if the hired servants, how much more the son: The father's house then,—was it not that of which it is elsewhere written, "Wisdom hath builded her house; she hath killed her beasts; she hath mingled her wine; she hath also furnished her table"; and "she said to him, Come, eat of my bread, and drink of the wine which I have mingled"? That holy house where Divine wisdom presides, and where the table is ever furnished, is the Eucharist. There our heart is satisfied, not with the bread of the hired servants, but with the bread of angels; there we rest united to Jesus Christ, our true Father, and He communicates to us of all His goods: "All that I have is thine." *Omnia mea tua sunt.* Prov. ix. 5.

### III.

But these good things were not enough for the Prodigal Son, and he demands of his father "the portion of goods that falleth to him."

To speak correctly, no portion belonged to him of his own proper right ; for "what have we that we did not receive," not of the justice, but of the goodness of God ?  
 1 Cor. iv. 7. But it is correct to say that the inheritance of every man coming into the world is divided into two parts : the one part comprises all purely natural goods, such as make up our being, the faculties of body and soul ; such is the knowledge of arts and sciences, which pertains to the intellect : riches, pleasures, honours, and glory ; this is the portion which the world claims, and which God consents to leave to it ; and this portion it is which the father gives up to the Prodigal Son. But there is another portion, which consists of the good things of grace, of which the prophet-king has written, "The Lord

Ps. xvi. 6. Himself is the portion of mine inheritance and of my cup"; as though he would say, "The inheritance which I possess from the Lord is, above all, His cup ; that cup which inebriates and is full of beauty, the chalice of the Eucharist." Ah ! this portion, this most precious portion, the world despises, and the Prodigal Son asks it not.

Behold him, then, taking his departure ; hurrying towards that distant land, which is the world ; and the more distant, the more it is separated from Jesus Christ. Behold him, rich and powerful, adorned with all the splendour of human knowledge, trusting his happiness to earthly affec-

tions ; who would ever think that he could lack anything ? One thing he lacketh, however ; one thing only ; but it is that of which it is written, “One thing is needful” ; the bread of the soul, the daily bread, the <sup>S. Luke x. 42.</sup> bread that he has forsaken ; and therefore, at the end of a very short time, when his riches are dispersed, and his power is broken, and his vain philosophy and science have left him void, and all his affections have deceived him, he finds that all he possesses is “vanity of vanities,” and that “the one thing needful” he possesses not ; and then that which makes him faint, and cast down, and destroyed, is not poverty, not sickness, nor ignorance, nor the desertion of men, but hunger : “I perish with hunger,” he says, “I perish with hunger.” *Fame Pereo.*

He is in the midst of the world, a world as rich as himself, as powerful and learned as he, honoured and beloved like himself ; and it is to the world he addresses himself : but, alas ! that which he wants, the world possesses not ; that which he lacks, and which casts him down and destroys him, is devastating the world. There was a great famine in all that land, says the Gospel : *Facta est fames valida in regione illa* ; and all were uttering the same cry of distress, “I perish with hunger.” *Fame Pereo.* O ! is it not true that there is a famine over all the earth ? Cast your eyes over the world : and though doubtless where the Church flourishes, where the Catholic faith is

preserved, where hearts are still fervent, the bread is distributed every day ; but what is that for the world at large ? " What is that among John vi. 9. so many ?" *Hæc quid sunt inter tantos ?* and then what a vast extent of country there is, what kingdoms and empires, where the Divine banquet is never spread, where no priest ever pronounces the words, " This is My Body ! This is My Blood ! " There are riches perhaps, and everything else in abundance, but at a sudden stroke there comes a famine ; and so the soul, Psalm lxiii. 6. deprived of this Divine " marrow," of this sacred substance, lacks virtue, chastity, humility, and all that gives a true moral tone to individuals and to nations.

I call on all faithful and fervent souls that love the Eucharist to bear witness of this privation ; is it not a famine that devours and destroys ? For you to possess the Eucharist is life ; to take It no more is death. However poor you may be, however deprived of fortune's favours, if you have the Eucharist, you swim in a sea of abundance ; and if you are deprived of It, however rich you may be in worldly things, you are reduced to crying out, like the poorest of the poor, " I perish with hunger." *Fame Peroe.*

#### IV.

But notice next to what an extremity of distress the Prodigal Son is reduced. He hires himself to a master, who sets him to the lowest

tasks, and all his ambition and desire is to be fed with the food that the swine have left.

A terrible chastisement, truly ; but one which contains so deep a lesson, that we cannot penetrate it too thoroughly. For the human soul there are but two kinds of food, the Eucharist or the leavings of the swine. Yes, doubtless ; because, for man, there is no middle state ; either Heaven or Hell ; either the bread of angels or the basest delights : and the reason of this is that in the present state of our nature, decayed by sin, and regenerated by Jesus Christ, man cannot but be (so to say) either above or below himself ; above, by the grace of God ; or below, by reason of sin. Sustained by the Divine wings of grace, he takes his flight like an eagle ; crushed down by sin, he crawls like the unclean animal ; and what follows ? As we well know, when we are truly Christians, and faithful observers of the holy law, material bread doth not suffice us, and we live not by bread alone, but are become more like angels than human creatures : Matt. iv. 4. so that, like the Angel Raphael, we may say that we seem indeed to eat and drink with other men, but our nourishment is an invisible bread, even that of the Eucharist ; and on the other hand, if we are sinners, and despise the precepts of God, let us not think that we can stop at the entrance of the pit, for we are compelled by force to seek for food to relieve the hunger that is destroying us, and to beg a\*

the door of some hard master, and satisfy ourselves with the husks that the swine have left.

## V.

We have considered the sin and the misery of the Prodigal Son ; let us now contemplate his return. As soon as he began to come to himself, his first words were these : “ How many hired servants of my father have bread enough and to spare, and I perish with hunger ” ; and then he adds, “ I will arise, and go to my father, and will say unto him, Father, I have sinned against Heaven, and before thee, and am no more worthy to be called thy son.”

I have great confidence, I admit, in the feelings of this sinner, whose first accents of regret are that he has been deprived of the Eucharist ; and who, esteeming already as of no value the frivolous advantages of the world, envies the lot of his poorer brethren, because they sit down at the Holy Table, and have Bread in abundance ; and I am sure that he will succeed in finding his Father, if he awaits at His Hands this Divine Bread every day ; I am sure of the repentance that says, “ I have sinned,” if this repentance prepares his soul to come to the Tabernacle of God ; I doubt not of the humility that inspires the words, “ I am not worthy,” pronounced at the foot of the Altar. Unbounded confidence, sincere repentance, profound humility, these are surely the conditions of true penitence ; but it is the Eucharist which

creates and strengthens them in our heart. The goodness of the God of the Eucharist inspires us with confidence, His Holiness leads us to repentance, and the majesty of His power makes us humble ; and the multitude of the faithful that are daily brought by It to repentance is the chief glory and triumph of the Eucharist.

When the solemn seasons of the Church come round we see a crowd of Christians rising up with the Prodigal Son, and repeating with him : “ I will arise and go to my Father ” ; we see them beating their breasts at the door of the sacred tribunals, and saying in accents of grief, “ I have sinned, I am not worthy to be called the child of God.” Why this compunction ? Why this humble confession of their faults ? It is because on the festival-day they would feed on this heavenly food, to be deprived of which is death ; it is because they have said, “ How many hired servants, how many poor, in the house of God, have bread enough and to spare, and I perish with hunger.” Their feet have found once more the path which leads to God, their souls are purified ; and one cannot say whether it is more by the earnestness of the repentance, or by the sacred fire of the Eucharist.

## VI.

Animated at once by desire for the bread of the Eucharist and by repentance for his sins, the Prodigal Son arises and goes to his father. “ But

when he was yet a great way off, his father saw him, and had compassion, and ran, and fell on his neck and kissed him." Nor was this all. "But the father said to the servants, Bring forth the best robe and put it on him ; and put a ring on his hand, and shoes on his feet : and bring hither the fatted calf, and kill it ; and let us eat and be merry ; for this my son was dead, and is alive again ; he was lost and is found" ; and the father and the son sit down at the same table.

Let us contemplate this touching scene ; but let us leave the figure, and consider the reality. This Father of the prodigal, who is he ? Who but Thou, my Saviour and my God ?—Thou, Who, when we were afar off, as the Apostle Paul says, Eph. ii. 17. "preachedst peace" unto us : Thou, Who, before time was, hadst pronounced over us these words, "I have loved thee with an everlasting love" ; and Jer. xxxi. 3. when we were captives in the chains of Adam, "I drew you with bands Hosea xi. 4. of love."

Thou, Who, in order to teach us, didst leap Ps. xix. 5. over space like a giant, crossedst the hills and the mountains, and descendedst from heaven to earth ; and, to join Thyself to us, didst run Thy course from Bethlehem to Nazareth, from Nazareth to Cana, to Capernaum, to Samaria, wherever we were with our miseries and sins : Thou, Who didst regenerate humanity

.with Thy Divine embrace, and gavest it the kiss of mercy and of peace in which it still rejoices ; Thou, lastly, Who becamest for us a Victim upon Calvary, making Thyself like to the fatted calf of the sacrifice, and to the lamb that is slain, hast willed to become our food and our banquet at the Table of the Eucharist, asking no other return for all Thy works, and words, and sufferings than the joy of being able to say, "This My son was dead, and is alive again ; he was lost, and is found." Oh ! how sweet is this reconciliation, which began before all worlds in the eternal love of the Divine Word ; which is continued in the Incarnation and the Passion, and ends only in the Eucharist : as if that alone, O my God, could satisfy the vastness of Thy love ! for when from the height of Heaven Thou didst cast upon us from afar those looks of pity, Thou wert seeking us then, but hadst not found us. When Thou wert born at Bethlehem, and passedst through Judea, Thou wert seeking us then, but hadst not found us : and even when Thou didst die for us, Thou didst not find us at the foot of Thy Cross : but when at last Thou didst lead us to the Eucharistic feast, and there reclinedst Thyself upon our heart, then wert Thou sure of us, and didst say with confidence, "This My son was dead, but I have restored him to life by communicating to him of My Divine life : I lost him in the midst of the world, but I have found him again at the Table of the Eucharist !" Oh ! when the Pro-

digal Son is received again by his father with such goodness, and is seated anew at his table, what happiness does he not find? None can tell but he who has experienced it.

## VII.

If there is any one Communion which more than all the rest, in the course of a whole life, inspires the Christian's soul with the deepest feeling of recognition and joy, it is certainly that which a man has the happiness to make when, after having been long separated from the Holy Table, he at length returns to God, and his conversion is sincere.

As a child, he had received a Christian education, and once at least he had communicated with purity and fervour of soul; but having grown up to manhood, his passions were like a stormy wind, and he has forgotten, and neglected, and abandoned all. We saw him in the midst of the world, how he allowed himself to be carried away by the whirlwind that was devouring him; how he suffered himself to be intoxicated by the smoke which is breathed there, for the world is only smoke; how he was led astray by the vanities which he met there, for the world is nought but vanity; how he seized with delight upon the shadows that passed before him, for the world passeth away like a shadow. But in his faded heart, where there seemed to be neither

faith nor love remaining, God had left both recollection and remorse : recollection of the day of his first Communion ; remorse for having so grievously offended a God whom he had known only through the joy of the Eucharist. And so the light of this smoking torch is rekindled, and its flame bursts forth anew. He recalls to his recollection his Christian mother, and the old servants of his house who rocked his cradle in the names of Jesus and Mary. He recalls the first prayer he uttered, "Our Father, which art in Heaven" ; and he says, "I will arise, and go to my Father." Ah ! well is it for him that his Father sees him afar off ; well is it that He hastens to meet him ; well is it that He clasps him in His Divine caress ; and says of him, to His servants the Priests, "Clothe him again in his former robe of innocence which he wore on the day of his baptism ; place upon his finger the ring of his old alliance with Me ; for to-day will I set Myself as a seal upon his arm and on his heart ; on his arm to strengthen him, and on his heart to inspire him with love. Put <sup>Cant. viii. 6.</sup> shoes on his feet, that he may be <sup>as those who run the way of My Commandments</sup> when I have set their heart at liberty, <sup>Ps. cxix. 32.</sup> and make ready the feast of reconciliation."

Ah ! when that happy day has come, what rapture is there in the soul of the noble youth who gives himself entirely to God, and what

happiness surrounds him ! When his mother beholds him approaching the Altar, she sheds the sweetest tears of her life, and says, " This my son was dead, and is alive again ; he was lost, and is found." His Christian friends who had so often given him fruitless advice, and were so far estranged from him, are with him now, and say, " This our friend was dead, and is alive again ; he was lost, and is found." And in the highest Heavens the angels who had veiled their faces at the sight of his sins behold him now with satisfaction, and sing in chorus, " This our brother was dead, and is alive again ; he was lost, and is found." But, far more than his mother, far more than his friends, far more than the angels, Jesus Christ Himself leaps for joy, and laying Himself upon his heart, says, " O My son, My friend, My brother, thou who wert dead and art alive again, thou who wert lost and whom I have found, be filled with satiety now, and let us rejoice together : for verily I say unto thee, there

Luke xv. 7.      is more joy in Heaven over one sinner that repenteth like thee, than over ninety and nine just persons that need no repentance."

## VIII.

And for ourselves, who have passed our life beneath the shadow of the tabernacle and the sanctuary, to whom Jesus Christ has always been able to say, " All that I have is thine"—*Omnia meum*

*tua sunt*—let us not imitate the elder brother of this prodigal, but, without fear that the infinite treasures of the Saviour will ever fail for us, let us ask of Him to pour forth upon others the treasures of His mercy; let us ask Him to “behold afar off,”—for all sinners whom we know and love, all poor prodigals *are* afar off,—let us ask of Him that He will run after them, for “in the ways of wickedness whither their feet have wearied themselves,” He      Wisd. v. 7.  
only can reach them; let us ask of  
Him to turn towards them; for unless He re-  
gard them with pity they will faint by the way,  
and will not even be able to say, “I perish with  
hunger;” let us ask Him to draw them tenderly  
to His bosom, and embrace them; for though  
they have resisted the threats of His justice,  
they will not resist the charms of His love; let  
us ask Him, finally, to cause them to sit down  
at the heavenly banquet of the Eucharist, in  
order that all being made “alive again,” and all  
“found,” they all may bless their “Father which  
is in Heaven,”—may bless Him in time and in  
eternity.





## The Sweetest Recollection and the Best Hope.

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“Exitus matutini et vespero delectabis.”

“Thou makest the outgoings of the morning and evening to praise Thee.”—*Psalm lxv. 8.*

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HE traveller who is climbing a mountain often stops in the midst of his way, and casting his eyes around upon the road that he has traversed and upon that which he still has to travel, he loves to take account of the impressions he has received, and of those which still await him.

Doubtless he has already suffered much fatigue, his feet have often struck against the stones in the pathway, and his dress has been torn by the brambles ; but at the same time what agreeable impressions he has gathered, and what sweet joys he has tasted ! The higher he ascended, the purer was the air, and the more the country unveiled itself to his eyes with greater variety and beauty ; and if any object struck him more par-

ticularly,—a pleasanter spot, a greener meadow, a clearer stream,—it is the recollection of these more than all that he stores up in his memory, and that he will love to recall.

So, also, for that part of the journey that still awaits him. Doubtless his weariness will increase, and new difficulties will attend him ; but if he is sure of finding at the top of the mountain a finer prospect, or the rest which he longs for, he is pleased to dream over it beforehand, and sets out again full of courage, animated all the time both by the recollection of the past, and by the hope of the future.

## II.

So it is with ourselves, when, in the midst of our life, we stop to reflect upon the point at which we have arrived, and look in succession upon the days of the past and on those which are spread out before us.

Beginning with the past life, we first divide it into two parts : the good days and the evil days. The evil days :—Who of us knows not by experience, that as the bird is made for flight, so man is born to trouble Job v. 7. and labour? Our life begins with tears, and our earliest infancy is passed in cries; then come the troubles of childhood; the first mistakes of self-love springing up within us, the first griefs of the soul, which no sooner awakes to its existence

than it perceives, instinctively as it were, the difficulty and the nothingness of it. Later on in life, serious troubles accumulate : false illusions, checks, and above all, cruel losses which we can never forget. Alas ! how many have smiled around our cradles, over whose tombs we weep ! How many have been the friends and companions of our youth, that we have left upon the way ! How many followed us in life, who have preceded us in death ! Oh, for how much sorrow have a few years, a few days sufficed ! But if we have the happiness to be Christians, what are all the ills of our past life in comparison with the sins we have committed ? These are what we recollect with more bitterness than all the rest. Our iniquities are ever present to us, our sins are ever before us. What have we received from the blessed hands of God that we have not defiled ? What talents have we not hid and what fruits have we produced ? Alas, for the days that we would hide in impenetrable darkness, because they remind us of the remorse and shame that they have left to us !

But side by side with these evil recollections, there are those on the other hand which cause our souls to rejoice in the past. There are, for example, those happy moments which Providence allots to every man that comes into the world, so that there is not one who cannot at the end of his existence say, "I have tasted  
1 Sam. xiv. 43. a little honey before I die." If

infancy has its tears it has also its joys, when the horizon of life is the family circle, and we know nothing of the world around us but the father whom we venerate and the mother whom we love. If youth has its vexations it has also its pleasures, when the spirit is become matured, and acquires a taste for noble works, and the heart opens itself to holy affections that promise real happiness.

But as the Christian's bitterest remembrance is that of his sins, he loves nothing so much as the recollection of the graces which he has received from God. He reminds himself of his first prayer, his first act of charity, the first time that his mother made him kneel down in church ; and if he was too young to have preserved the memory of these things, he is still more grateful to think that he has never lived without prayer or without loving God and His poor. And what favours did he not receive from Heaven as he grew up under the eye of God ! What holy words has he heard ! and, if he was faithful, what good works, what deeds precious in God's sight did he perform ! But nothing inspires him with more thoughtfulness than do the Communions he has made. Here was the very perfume of his life, and he loves to inhale it again ; here was the treasure of his days, and he reckons it over with a holy pride. He has not forgotten that each Communion fortified him against some peril, adorned him with some new virtue, or at least made him love it.

With what happiness has he not ever approached the Altar of God, even the God of his joy and gladness !

And yet we may truly say of the Communions of a Christian as of the stars of Heaven, of which

1 Cor. xv. 41. it is written, "One star differeth from another star in glory."

All unite together to procure for us immeasurable treasures ; but are there not some which have surpassed all the rest ? Yes ; for just as amidst the blessings of earth we give the first place to the graces of God, and esteem our Communions as the chiefest of these, yet even among these latter there is one that we prefer to all the rest, one upon which our thoughts are ever fixed, one which is our sweetest recollection, and that is our First Communion.

### III.

Our First Communion ! Oh ! what was our disposition then, both by reason of the innocence of our early life, and of the first repentance for our sins !

Our First Communion ! Then was it that Jesus Christ entered for the first time into our soul, and gave us His first kiss of peace, His first caress, the first milk from His motherly breast ; then was it that the angels first envied us, and asked if it were indeed true, that we were

created above them. Then was it that the faithful surrounded us with songs of joy, and chanted over us their hosanna, and said with that woman of Judea, "Blessed is the womb which beareth Jesus Christ"; and if the people had kept silence, the very stones of the sanctuary would have cried out and blessed the Thrice-Holy God. Then it was that our mother forgot the pains of child-bearing, and was filled with a holy pride for having brought into the world a Man who has become the tabernacle of His God; then was it that our tears were so sweet, our songs so angelic, our prayers so acceptable; then was it that our faith was so lively, our hopes so ardent; then was it, above all, that we loved the most.

All before our First Communion is blotted out and disappears in the darkness. What had been our former happiness, what the splendour of the past? Let us seek and reflect, and we shall find ever that the First Communion is like the most costly pearl cast at the bottom of the ocean of our life; it is most truly our sweetest recollection.

#### IV.

So much for the past; and if next we look to the future, then we shall equally find griefs and joys, fears and hopes, evil days and good days.

First, griefs, fears, evil days; for, in proportion as we advance in age, God, in His mercy, will

Ps. viii. 5.

Luke xi. 27.

detach us more and more from this world which we must quit: and since we are mad enough to prefer present joy to eternal happiness, God will withdraw these joys and change them into bitterness. We shall see infirmities gradually wasting our body and enervating our soul. We shall see, as in the past, that our illusions vanish away, but with much more disastrous effects ; we shall see our friendships destroyed, but with much more violent rendings ; in fact, we shall no longer have to choose between happiness and unhappiness, but between numberless evils here below and the heavenly blessings that await us.

Just as in the past our greatest evils are our own faults, so when we look to the future with a Christian's eye, that which we most have to fear is our own faithlessness.

Yes, Lord, that which causes me, the more I advance in life, the more to fear and hate the world, is not only that the world is the soil from which springs all the ills of life, like thorns in our path, but above all that it is the accursed place where Thou art continually offended ; that there the spirit suffers itself to be tossed about by every wind of doctrine, and the heart becomes corrupt ; that there one is weak amid all danger, without resistance to all seductions ; that there one ceases not to prefer the vanities of the hour to Thee, Who art beauty ever ancient and yet ever new !

Thus in the future I shall have trials to bear

with, perhaps the misfortune still to commit many faults. This is what terrifies me. But then what hope have I ! what happiness may I still expect ! what good days will compensate me for the evil ones !

Ah ! I pause not to desire nor to seek for human happiness. The experience of the past has taught me to understand its emptiness and its nothingness, yet I find a peaceful joy in entrusting entirely to God the days which He appoints for me, and can say, "The Lord is my Shepherd ; therefore can I lack nothing." Day by day will I ask of Him my daily bread, and He will give it me. He who clothes the birds of the field will clothe me ; He who shelters the turtledove and the sparrow will shelter me ; this filial confidence is sufficient to calm my fears for the future.

But the expectation of my heart, and that which will not be refused me, is on the one hand new graces from God, and on the other greater faithfulness in accordance with those graces. What holy words shall I still hear ! what pious and sound studies will enlighten my understanding ! Soon, perhaps, I shall hear from the pulpit the voice that will touch me more deeply, and soon I shall have within my hands the book that will make me love God more. But, above all, I shall be more faithful ; I have prayed much in the past ; I will pray still, and more fervently ; I have tried to do right, and will do so still more ;

I have practised the Christian virtues, and I will do so still more earnestly. These are the holy thoughts that beforehand charm and adorn my life.

But yet what good is there in the life of the Christian, and what is there that is truly beautiful, except "the corn of the elect, and the wine that gladdeneth the virgins"? Ah! my sweetest hope is still in the Communions that I shall make. Formerly I approached the Altar of the God Who made happy my youth; grown older, I shall love Ps. ciii. 5. still to approach the Altar which will renew my youth like an eagle.

The more I separate myself from the society of the world, the more pleasure shall I have in the solitude of the sanctuary; the more my connection with the world ceases, the more will be multiplied to me all that will unite me to God; the more I renounce the world, the more entirely shall I give myself up to the sweet delights of the Eucharist.

Glancing in thought for an instant over my first Communions, I have been able to select one which I have called my sweetest remembrance; shall it not be the same with my future Communions, and may I not in like manner select one of them to be my best hope? I picture to myself in succession the different phases of my future existence, and thinking over the fervent Communions which I shall make, I say to myself, Is it this one or that which I shall prefer? And,

when I think that my life must come to an end, and that its termination will be the passing from time to eternity, that at that critical moment I shall have many dangers to fear, but that the crown which awaits me will be close at hand and that Thou, O my Saviour, wilt then come and unite Thyself to me, for the last time, in the Holy Eucharist, driving away all my fears, and showing to me Thyself as my recompense, I hesitate no longer, but can say with confidence, that my last Communion is my best hope.

## V.

My last Communion ! Ah ! it is no longer I who shall come to find Jesus in His Sanctuary, but He Who will visit me upon my bed of sickness ; and if I am ever so poor He will not disdain to enter my cot. Oh ! blessed be His Presence with me ! On the day of my first Communion, He fed me like a child with the milk of His breasts, and now He will give me the bread of strength, that bread in virtue of which I shall, without fail, ascend to the holy mount. On the day of my first Communion, He saluted me with the first kiss of peace, and now He will give me a last kiss, even that of His leave-taking, before I fall asleep upon His bosom. But that which will make my last Communion precious is that the Eucharistic veils, those veils which my eyes have in vain endeavoured to

pierce, will then be on the point of fading away ; yet a little while, and I shall see my God face to face ; yet a little while, and I shall possess for ever Him whom my soul loveth. There is still the wall behind, but one may say, that "He Cant. ii. 9. looketh forth at the windows, shewing Himself through the lattice." One may say that His Divine word vibrates more upon my ear, and that already it reaches me like the feeble echo of the voice which I shall hear in heaven. Of what import then will be to me the ills or the blessings of this life ? The ills I dread no more, its good things I disdain ; my last Communion opens my eyes to the truth. I fear no more the terrors of death, for the love which unites me to my God is stronger than it. I desire, with S. Paul, "to depart, and to Phil. i. 23. be with Christ, which is far better."

May these feelings be those of our last moments, and may the Holy Communion establish them then in our heart ! Should not this be our chiefest longing ? and have I not reason to say that if our first Communion was our sweetest recollection, our last will be our best hope ? The one was like a most precious pearl at the bottom of the ocean of our life, the other will be like a star to guide and conduct us to the harbour, and will not cease to shine over the firmament of our existence ; and thus it may truly be said, that the Lord has caused me to rejoice both evening and morning : n the

morning, because it is upon Him that our sweetest recollection is bound ; in the evening, because He will be then our best hope : "The outgoings of the morning and of the evening shall praise Thee."

## VI.

Between these two Communions, as between two boundaries, recollection and hope, let us pursue the paths along which Providence leads us.

Nor let us forget to be thankful when we think how many there are who have not, like ourselves, the blessing of being Christians, and who have only the bitter recollection of a time that is no more, and can see in the future nothing but the anguish and terror which awaits them at the threshold of the tomb.

Here a thought suggests itself to me, which I may usefully put in practice each time I communicate.

Why does my first Communion seem so sweet, and my last so efficacious ?

Is it not that in my first Communion my soul was shining in all the brightness of its original freshness, my hands were innocent, and my heart more fair and more loving ? And will it not be that in the last, being completely detached from the world and all that is in it, I shall aspire only to the possession of heavenly felicity ?

But if on the one hand innocence and love,

and on the other detachment from the world and desire for Heaven, suffice to make these two Communions so perfect, why then may I not always communicate as at the first and last times ?

Why should I not seek always, whenever I approach the Holy Table, to unite childlike purity with the absolute renunciation of the man who walks with his eyes closed to the things of earth ?

Why should not every one of my Communions exhibit at once, like the first one, tender love towards Jesus Christ, and like the last, an eternal farewell to the world ?

Why should I not always thank my Lord and my God, as I thanked Him when He first deigned to introduce me to the Eucharist, and as I shall thank Him when He opens to me the gates of Heaven ?

Oh ! if it were so, how happy should we be ! All our Communions, being like the first and the last, would be our sweetest recollection and our best hope. We should strive to become more and more Christians, in order that we might be worthy to communicate almost daily ; and then what a charm would spread itself over the whole of our existence ! Almost every day we should be able to say, The recollection of yesterday is the sweetest recollection of my life ; I had the happiness to communicate : and the hope of to-morrow is my best hope, for I shall have the happiness to communicate again.



## The Passion and the Eucharist.

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“Constituit eum super excelsam terram . . . ut sugerat mel de petra, oleumque de saxo durissimo.”

“He made him ride on the high places of the earth, that he might eat the increase of the fields ; and he made him to suck honey out of the rock, and oil out of the flinty rock.”—*Deut. xxxii. 13.*

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HE God of Israel had delivered His people from the bondage of Egypt, and had led them into the promised land.

Moses, on the point of accomplishing his mission, celebrates in song the wonders that the Lord had wrought on behalf of the Jews, and picturing to them beforehand the unspeakable blessings which they were about to enjoy, says to them, “God has led His people to the high places of the earth, that He may make them to suck honey out of the rock, and oil out of the flinty rock.”

We know that the Jewish nation was a type of the Christian world, and that “all these things

1 Cor. x. 11. happened unto them for ensamples." We may then seek in the words of this song of Moses a hidden sense, and see therein a figure of the new covenant. And first, what are these high places, to which the Lord conducts me? These high places, which are not indeed Heaven itself, and yet are far above all the lower regions of the world, what can they pourtray to me but the Altar? The Altar, whence I shall gather "honey out of the rock, and oil out of the flinty rock."

But all is a mystery here, and who shall explain this language to me? Nothing is harder surely than the stone and the rock, nothing sweeter than honey and oil; how shall the rock produce honey, or how shall oil flow from the flinty rock? And first, what is this rock and this flinty rock?

Ah! when I think that on the rock of Calvary was offered the Divine Victim for the salvation of the world; that every day on the sacred stone of our Altars this sacrifice is continued, I am easily persuaded that the rock and the flinty rock are here symbols of the Passion of the Saviour. For what is harder than the crown of thorns, the nails, the cross, the spear? So much so that the very rocks were rent at the death of the Saviour.

But what honey shall I gather from this rock, what oil from this flinty rock?

When the Altar sets before my eyes the Holy Victim, it puts before me at the same time a

delicious banquet. On the one hand, faith shows me the body of Jesus Christ, torn and bleeding, and expiring on the Altar as on the Cross ; on the other hand, it shows me this same Body under the humble form of bread and wine. I taste this precious food, and it is sweeter than honey to my lips. I am inebriated with this sacred drink, and it gives more power to my members than the oil spread over the body of the wrestler. O holy Eucharist, thou art then this honey and this oil ; and since the Altar where thou dwellest is that whereon Jesus Christ offers Himself, since thou art given to me in memory of His Passion, since the supper wherein thou wert instituted is that wherein Jesus Christ uttered to His Apostles His last farewell before His death, am I not right in asserting that when thou art consecrated or received at the Altar, I gather the honey from the rock, and the oil from the flinty rock ?

It is to me a truly blessed and consoling thought, that this exact connection exists between the Passion and the Eucharist.

The Passion is hard and bitter to me, from the recollection of my Saviour's sufferings, from the remembrance of my own faults, and from the severity of the lessons which I learn at the foot of the Cross ; and it is the sweetness of the Eucharist, the oil and the honey gathered from the rock, which makes sweet to me this three-fold bitterness.

But the Passion, before being bitter to me, has been bitter to Jesus Christ : bitter, by reason of the torments which He underwent, and the death which snatched Him from the world ; bitter, beyond all, by reason of His fore-knowledge of man's ingratitude : and before meditating on the consolations which the Eucharist offers to myself, I love to think upon those which Jesus Christ found at the first institution of this Holy Sacrament ; picturing to myself how He, the first of all, and the chiefest of His people, on the high places of the Altar, first gathered the honey from the rock, and the oil from the flinty rock.

Thus, then, the Passion is hard for Christ and for us ; but the Eucharist, which is united to it, sweetens this bitterness both for His heart and for ours. Let us cherish this holy thought ; for, by connecting together the Passion and the Eucharist, it will perhaps make us love them both the more ; the Passion, because to it we owe the Eucharist ; the Eucharist, because in order that we might enjoy its delights, no less was necessary than the sufferings and the death of God.

## II.

The Eucharist attempers the bitterness of the Passion in the heart of Jesus. The Passion was for Him doubtless bitter ; first, by reason of the terrible sufferings which it caused Him to endure. But, before He suffered, He instituted the Eucha-

rist, and the Eucharist seemed to Him far sweeter than the Passion was bitter, by reason of the blessings which it procured for the world.

The more we study Jesus Christ, the better do we understand that His Divine relations towards us may be summed up in these words, "To love us and to make us happy." His love for us is the starting point from whence He proceeds ; our happiness is the end whither He reaches unto : but between these two boundaries, what a long and sad career ! what a gulf to be overstepped : the sufferings and the death ! But no matter, the sufferings are nothing to Him, to whom our happiness is everything ; His tears are nothing to Him, provided that ours may be staunched ; His wounds are nothing to Him, if only ours may be healed ; His sorrows are nothing to Him, if only our griefs may be consoled. The greater the sufferings that He endured, the more happiness did He demand of His Father for us. The happiness which He causes us to enjoy is placed ever side by side with His own sufferings, as their recompense and their compensation.

His first tears at Bethlehem, the poverty of His cradle, scared Him not ; for He knew well that around this little crib should kneel successive generations, and that all hearts should be expanded, all griefs appeased, all children made happy, and all mothers should rejoice. And then, at the close of His life, the love which He bore for us would be the motive of greater suf-

ferings on His part, of greater happiness for us. His greatest suffering is His Passion ; our greatest happiness is the Eucharist.

He saw in this Sacrament His Body broken, and His Blood shed, becoming for ever our choicest delights. He saw this, and at that great hour, as one may say, the thought of the happiness that He was procuring for the world by the Eucharist increases His strength and courage. The Institution of this Sacrament immediately precedes the Passion.

How do I love to behold Jesus Christ going forth from the Upper Chamber on His road to Calvary ! How I love to hear Him, after the Last Supper, singing the joyful hymn of thanksgiving, before proceeding to the Mount of Olives ! I can imagine Him during the cruel hours of the Passion, thinking upon the sweet effusions of the Upper Chamber ; when His Body shall be broken and His Blood shed, He will more readily consent to be bruised like the corn, and pressed like the grape, because He has already made Himself the bread which strengthens and the wine which rejoices the heart of man. And at length expiring on the Cross, He will dwell happily on the thought that this Cross, so hard and bitter, shall be the rock to which all Christian generations shall come to gather the honey and the oil of the Eucharist, to " suck the honey out of the rock, and oil out of the flinty rock."

But what adds to the bitterness of the Saviour's

sufferings is the thought that death is about to separate Him from the earth ; from that earth which He loved so much,—not as they love it who are in the world, for its vain pleasures and its perishable delights, but which He loved because, sent thither by His Divine Father, He passed His life in doing good ; which He loved because He redeemed it by His Word ; which He loved because *there* have resounded His Divine words, and *there* were manifested His marvellous acts ; which He loves, finally, because He knows man's need of His Divine Presence. It is He Who may truly complain to death, and Who has the right to say it, “ Is it thus that thou separatest Me from those whom I have loved so much, O bitter death ? ”

Some sweetening there must be of this bitter separation, and it is the Eucharist which offers it. Before death had removed Jesus Christ from the earth, the Eucharist had renewed and multiplied His life upon our Altars ; dying for us, He will not leave us orphans, and it is the Eucharist which restores to us our Divine Father. Day by day, from one end of the world to the other, the Priest repeats at the Altar the words which he has received, “ This is My Body ; ” and the Body of Jesus, united to His soul and His Divinity, reappears in the midst of us. Nothing fails of the integrity of this Eucharistic life, neither power nor love.

Oh, ye who are blind, come to the Altar : Jesus

Christ is on the Altar, as aforetime He was on the way to Jericho, and He will open your eyes to the light. Oh, ye who are without strength and courage to walk in the paths of virtue, come to the Altar ; Jesus is on the Altar, as He was at Capernaum ; and He will say to you as He did to the paralytic, “ Thy sins are forgiven thee : arise and walk.” Poor sinful Magdalene, come to the Altar ; Jesus sojourns on the Altar, as aforetime He sojourned in the house of Simon the leper ; and if you love Him as Mary did, you shall be pardoned as she. What more shall I say ? All ye who are weary, troubled, and agitated by the storms of time, shelter yourselves near the Altar ; Jesus is present on the Altar, as aforetime on the Lake of Galilee, and He has there also but to speak one word, and there shall be in your soul a great calm.

The thought of the numberless miracles which the Eucharist would work was the greatest encouragement to Jesus Christ at His last hour ; He would not refuse us the benefits of His death, since He could preserve to us the blessings of His presence : and His tenderness shall be fully satisfied ; that tenderness which would not have been content to live with us without dying for us, nor to die for us if He had been obliged to cease to live with us.

Lastly, that which puts a finishing touch to the bitterness of the Passion is the hatred and ingratitude of mankind. Those whom He most

loved, are they who betray and deny Him. Those upon whom He heaped blessings, are they who insult Him and do Him violence. Those whom He came to save, nail Him to the Cross. What more could He have done for His vineyard that He has not done for it? He waited that it should bring forth grapes, and, behold, it brought forth wild grapes. And if His Divine eyes stretch themselves over the ages to come, what a cruel prospect is added to His present griefs! Not even His crown of thorns shall make the world less proud, nor shall His scourging make it less sensual, or His Cross less sinful. Here is what makes Him grieve so deeply. Yet who can deny but that in the midst of this anguish, the thought of the Eucharist refreshes and consoles His soul? The Eucharist will doubtless find many ungrateful hearts, but it will kindle so many affections, it will create so much devotion, it will light up throughout the Church in every breast such a flame of love, that neither indifference nor hatred shall ever be able to quench. For one Judas that betrayed Him, how many beloved disciples shall recline their heads with joy upon the breast of their Divine Master! Yes, Jesus Christ formed to Himself in the upper chamber a holy and a chosen tribe, who, having no other country than the Altar, no other food than the bread of the Altar, shall have also no love, no thought, no life, but for the God of the Altar. I would for a moment separate myself from the world and

from all that is in the world, and humbling myself with this holy tribe, of all countries and of all ages, at the feet of the tabernacle, I would gather together in thought all the acts of love, of adoration, and of respect, which the Eucharist has produced, from the time of the upper chamber even to our own days.

What clouds of incense rising to Heaven ! what tuneful concords, making even angels envious ! how many fervent prayers ! how many bended knees ! how many extended hands ! what tears, worth more than all joys ! what sweet joys in the depths of the soul, worth more than all pleasures ! what happy days, of which it has been Ps. lxxxiv. 11. said, "One day in Thy courts is better than a thousand" ! What holy watchings, of which it has been said, "The Ps. cxxxix. 12. night shineth as the day" ! What heavenly longings, what burning words, what mighty deeds brought to perfection ! Here is the work of the Eucharist ; and what is all this but love and love alone, with which the Divine Eucharist inspires us ? What makes me love the Eucharist more than all else is that more than all else in the world it makes us love Jesus Christ. In Heaven we shall see Him, shall contemplate Him without any veils, and adore Him without the shadows of faith ; but in Heaven shall we love Him more than we have loved Him, and do love Him, and will love Him, in the Eucharist ? Yes ; this burning

love of pious souls, and this zealous activity of the faithful, is the honey and the oil that Jesus Christ gathers from the hard rock of His Passion, the honey out of the rock and the oil out of the flinty rock.

### III.

But is it for Jesus only that the Eucharist sweetens the bitterness of the Passion? No; it attempers it in like manner to ourselves.

And first, how shall Christian hearts be insensible to the sufferings of Jesus? The more He has deigned to endure for us, the more are we constrained to endure with Him. But when we think of His triumph over death, and of His dividing Himself, so to speak, between the joys of Heaven and the sweet repose of the Tabernacle, our souls are comforted, and our spirits rest happily on this peace of the Eucharist, as contrasted with the horrors of Calvary.

In the second place, the Passion of Jesus Christ recalls to our recollection the sins that we have committed, inasmuch as He suffered only to expiate them. We review in bitterness of soul those sad scenes wherein Jesus Christ made Himself our Victim, and wherein we are His murderers and executioners. But with all this, what a consolation to us to think that the Eucharist, by virtue of His sacrifice and of that of the Sacrament, offers us the sure means of regaining the friendship of God!

The Eucharist brings the Passion again before our eyes, no longer sad and bleeding, no more as a hard consequence of sin, but as a token of love, as a surety of peace, as a sign of reconciliation. Jesus Christ in the Eucharist is none other than this peaceful Victim, Who offers Himself to God His Father, and "Who, borne by the hands of the angel to the throne of the Divine Majesty, causes blessings and graces to descend upon us."

Yes, the recollection of our faults, inseparable from the sufferings of the Saviour, saddens us ; but if Jesus Christ died for our sins, He lives again day by day in the Eucharist for our justification ; and this thought appeases our griefs ; and as the sweet repose of Jesus in the Tabernacle is the honey which the Eucharist causes me to gather when the bitter thought of the Passion breaks my heart, so the Divine grace which this Sacrament confers upon me is the oil that heals my wounds, when the wound recalls to me my offences.

But that which makes the Passion of Jesus Christ seem to us hardest of all is the stern language in which it addresses us, and the laborious duties which it imposes upon us. How lofty and difficult are the virtues which the example of a Crucified God preaches to us ! The sacrifice and renunciation of everything ; resignation in trouble, patience in affliction ; certainly these are hard things, and who can bear them ? But to sweeten their severity the Eucharist will be

as oil. "Thy name is as ointment  
poured forth." Not indeed that the Cant. i. 3.  
Eucharist preaches a different doctrine from the Passion, not that It offers to us any other example, or teaches us any other duties; but those which the Passion teaches in a stern voice, the Eucharist insinuates in accents full of delight, "Thy name is as ointment poured forth."

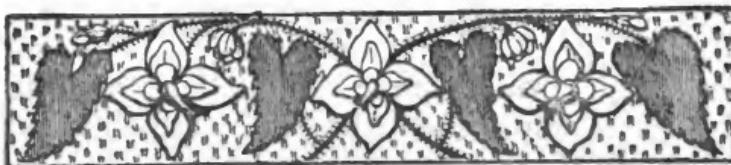
The Passion says to us, "If thou wouldest be Christ's disciple, take up thy cross and follow Him"; the Eucharist adds, "But if the burden of the cross is too heavy, if the toils of the Passion are too wearying, come unto Me, and I will give you rest." The Passion says to us, "If thou wouldest be Christ's disciple, die unto thyself and unto the world; sacrifice unto Me thy dearest affections"; the Eucharist adds, "But if thou diest unto the world, thou shalt possess Me wholly, and shalt live only for Me, Who am far better than the world. If thou sacrificest to Me thy dearest affections, thou shalt receive from Me an hundredfold; for I love thee an hundred times better than father, mother, brother, husband, or wife."

Thus the Eucharist sometimes persuades where the teaching of the Passion terrifies. Let us thank the Lord that He has made His Cross so sweet, and His Passion so lovely, by uniting them thus directly with the Divine Eucharist; for we may truly say that if we have courage to climb the rock of Calvary and to kneel on the

tombstone that covers the bleeding Body of the Saviour, it is because this rock and this stone are become the Altar whence it is given unto us to taste the honey and the oil of the Eucharistic feast, "honey out of the rock, and oil out of the flinty rock."

## IV.

Here, O God, is the very sign by which we recognize Thee ; Thou alone canst gather honey and oil from the rock ; Thou alone canst bring good out of evil, and joy out of suffering. Therefore do I give myself unto Thee, and trust myself entirely in Thy hands. In every stone that hinders my steps, in every rock that forms a barrier to my path, cause Thou me to find the honey and the oil, give me Thy Eucharist. If Satan make war against me, and my weakened members are ready to sink under the strife, spread Thou over them the holy oil, give me Thy Eucharist ; and if trouble oppress me, and I can bear no more of bitterness and disappointment, succour me with Thy Divine nourishment, give me Thy Eucharist, until the day when Thou shalt crown me after the battle, and bring me to those heavenly habitations where there is no more stone, nor rock, nor perils, nor barriers, nor strife, nor bitterness, but where celestial joy spreads itself over the soul as an embalming oil, and nourishes it with Divine pleasures.



## Where the Christian finds his God.

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“Quemadmodum desiderat cervus ad fontes aquarum, ita  
desiderat anima mea ad te, Deus.”

“Like as the hart desireth the water-brooks ; so longeth  
my soul after Thee, O God.”—*Psalm xlvi. 1.*

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**T**HE royal prophet, who, in his beautiful songs, celebrated beforehand the various mysteries of the Christian Faith, has taken care not to leave out one of the holiest and most solemn of them, that of the Eucharist.

In many parts of the Psalms we find the praise of this Sacrament of love anticipated. This it is which David has in view when he exclaims in a transport of joy, “How amiable are Thy tabernacles, O Lord of Hosts”; and again, “The Lord is my Shepherd, therefore can I lack nothing; He shall feed me in a green pasture”; and yet again, “Thou shalt prepare a table before me, against them that

Ps. lxxxiv. 1.

Ps. xxiii. 1.

Ps. xxiii. 5. trouble me ; Thou hast anointed my head with oil, and my cup shall be full."

In like manner none can deny that he speaks of the Eucharist in the first verses of the forty-second Psalm : " Like as the hart desireth the water-brooks, so longeth my soul after Thee, O God. My soul is athirst for God, yea, even for the living God ; when shall I come to appear before the presence of God ? My tears have been my meat day and night ; while they daily say unto me, Where is now thy God ? Now when I think thereupon, I pour out my heart by myself ; for I went with the multitude, and brought them forth into the house of God : in the voice of praise and thanksgiving, among such as keep holy-day. Why art thou so full of heaviness, oh my soul ; and why art thou so disquieted within me ? "

Having heard these holy words of mystery, let us think over them, meditate upon them, and try to comprehend their meaning.

## II.

The royal prophet compares the fervent desire of the soul for God to that which urges the thirsty hart to the water-brooks. " Like as the hart desireth the water-brooks, so longeth my soul after Thee, O God."

David uses this figure because, encompassed as we are by the language of earth, and ruled by our outward senses, we can, as S. Paul says, only arrive at the knowledge of invisible things by the help of the things which are made. What affects the senses, and appertains to matter, we easily comprehend; but we comprehend less easily what relates to Heaven and to God. Yes, that is very true; but what misery and humiliation it is for us! We comprehend that the thirsty stag desires the water-brooks; we comprehend that the burning soil is athirst for the dew of Heaven; but we comprehend not the truths that are hidden under these symbols; we comprehend not that our soul, panting and more wearied than the stag, longeth after Thee, O my God, Who art the true living water; or that our heart, more parched and barren than the arid soil, sighs after Thee, O Lord, who art the true dew; we comprehend that the poor captive, enthralled in a gloomy dungeon, longs for a ray of light.

But at the same time that this language causes us to comprehend our own inferiority, it reveals to us also our true greatness. A few drops of water suffice to appease the appetite of the brute; but to fill the soul of man no less is required than the Divine immensity. Oh man, here is the measure of thy dignity; the difference between thee and the brute creation is even that between a drop of water and the

infinite. Nevertheless, take good heed that this measure of thy greatness reveal to thee also the inseparable condition attached to it. Take care lest if thou deviate from thy lofty destiny, if thou falsely attach thyself to material treasures or to empty honours which are but smoke, or to pleasures which are but dust and ashes, thou ceasest to be like thyself, and becomest like the brutes ; for if the hart confines itself to desiring the water-brooks my soul by nature longs after Thee, O God.

### III.

Now we may understand why the royal prophet uses this imagery.

But is the longing which we have towards God founded, like the beast's appetite, upon a real necessity of our being, or is it only a noble fiction? Does it rest upon the nature of our spirit and our heart, or is it rather an invention of the soul? Oh ! far from us be this thought ! No, it is not so that man invents. He contrives, with a soul created after the likeness of God, to abase himself beneath the vilest creatures ; with a heart created for the good things of eternity, he loves that which is passing and perishable. He contrives nothing beyond ; and when he finds at the bottom of his heart the knowledge of God, the desire of God, the love of God, it is not permitted to him to reject and cast away these Divine treasures as if they were dependent

upon his will ; for they are in him without himself. It is God Himself Who gives them to him and entrusts him with them, Who gives them to him requiring an account of them from him, Who entrusts them to him as a proof of His goodness.

Yes, just as God, in creating man's body, has submitted his senses to the grosser appetites, which material things suffice to satisfy, so, in creating the heart, He has submitted it to an immeasurable desire, even that of possessing the supreme and absolute good, which is none other than Himself.

The sublime instinct of the heart is as irresistible as that of the senses, but with this difference, that the latter tends to abase man to objects which are inferior to himself in nature and in dignity ; while the desire of the soul bears him unceasingly towards one Divine end, and raises him above himself. My lips desire the water-brooks which flow at my feet, but my soul aspires to Thee, O my God, Who reignest far above me. My senses covet a few drops of water that are powerless and lifeless, but my soul is athirst for Thee, O my God, Who art living and omnipotent, and Who givest me power and life.

#### IV.

David has expressed the desire of the soul, and he tells us also how it shall be satisfied.

"When shall I come to appear before the presence of God?"

When shall I come? For my soul, longing after God, gravitates unceasingly towards Him: and my life is but the long journey of which God will be the termination; the ocean, of which He is the port; the exile, of which He is the home.

When shall I come? But wherefore? To appear before His presence. O sublime and consoling words which the Holy Spirit teaches me, revealing to me my latter end. Reason alone has led me to know in myself the innate desire that draws me towards God, and makes me see in Him the end of my being and destiny. But in what does this destiny, this happiness, consist? Here faith comes to my assistance, and makes me see that which my natural eye sees not, and hear that which my fleshly ear hears not, and perceive that which the spirit of man perceives not; it opens to me the secret of Heaven. To appear before the presence of God, to contemplate Him as He is, to penetrate His Divine light by means of the light which He communicates to us, such is the highest blessing, such is the final consummation; for as the hart, when he has quenched his thirst, desires no more the water-brooks, so my intelligence is completely satisfied with God, Whom it has seen, my heart is full of God, Whom it loves, my soul desires

nothing further ; it cries, “ Whom have I in Heaven but Thee? and there is nothing on earth that I desire in comparison of Thee, O God of my heart, my lot for eternity.”

Thus in these first verses of the Psalm, David seems to follow the soul in its movements of ascent toward God ; and he sums them up in three words : The desire of God, The coming to God, The contemplation of God.

The desire of God is the essential condition of the human heart ; the coming to God is its life ; the contemplation of God is its happiness. The desire of God is the noblest attribute of our nature ; the coming to God is the work that grace operates in us ; the contemplation of God is our glorified being. The desire of God is the first principle of goodness ; the coming to God is the way of goodness ; the contemplation of God is the final end of goodness. Certainly these thoughts are lofty and consoling, and it is with joy that we thus draw water out of the wells of salvation, the life-giving fountains of the Saviour.

## V.

But how is it then that David having poured out his soul, and raised himself beforehand on the wings of desire even to the repose of contemplation, all at once changes his speech, and

exclaims, " My tears have been my meat day and night ? "

What connection is there between that which goes before and that which follows, what connection between this living source from whence the soul draws with joy and these bitter tears which are the meat by day and by night ? It is, says the royal prophet, that I hear every day repeated around me these words, " Where is now thy God ? "

O words of impiety, which even at this day cause the tears of the Christian to flow down ! As for him, he sees God in everything and everywhere ; and indeed God is all in all to the soul. The soul breathes, and God is its atmosphere. The soul is fed and watered, and God is the food of each day and the well-spring of living water. The soul journeys, and God is its way. The soul thinks and comprehends, and God is its truth. The soul speaks, God is its word ; it loves, God is its love. God is all for it ; and yet, without regard for its worship, its adoration, its homage, men cast these words of blasphemy and derision in its teeth, " Where is thy God ? "

The idolater can tell me where are his gods ; he points to the brass and the stone which he worships ; the godless man of the world knows his gods ; he bends the knee before the material object of his passion, his cupidity, and his pride. But neither the idolater nor the godless

man can find the God of the Christian's soul and so they say to him insultingly, "Where is now thy God?"

Where art Thou, O my God, where art Thou? Ah! rather would I ask, Where art Thou not? Thou art higher than the Heavens, which declare Thy glory. "If I climb up into Heaven, Thou art there; if I go down to hell, Thou art there also; if I take the wings of the morning, and remain in the uttermost parts of the sea, even there also shall Thy hand lead me, and Thy right hand shall hold me." Ps. cxxxix. 8.

How is it that to the ruder contemplation of the godless Thou shewest not Thyself at all? I speak to him of Thy works, and he contemplates them, but denies their Author. I speak to him of Thy benefits, and he accepts them, but denies the Benefactor. I question him of his intelligence, but he has become like the unreasoning brute. I address myself to his heart, but it is from the bottom of his corrupt heart that the fool utters these words, "There is no God."

In truth I feel myself powerless against this crime and folly, and if I would answer the godless man, I can but betake myself to tears. By day I weep for the blasphemies of every one of his days, by night I weep for the shame of his nights; and my tears make me forget my daily food and my nightly repose.

So, when the desire of God, Who is in me, and the thought of heavenly happiness, rejoice my heart, these words of the unbelieving overwhelm me with the deepest grief, "Where is now thy God?" Nor do they only afflict me, but, returning unceasingly to my ears, they weary my soul, and throw it into disquietude and trouble. My eyes grow weak, like those of Hezekiah, and fail with looking upward uselessly towards Heaven, and hearing repeated around me, Where is thy God? and in my distress I cry, "Lord God, Where art Thou, and where shall I find Thee?"

## VI.

But the royal prophet now suggests to me the answer: "I will leap over space," he continues, "I will go to those wondrous regions where the Tabernacle rests, even the house of my God. There shall I delight myself with the songs of joy that mingle themselves with the pleasures of the banquet: how shall my soul be any longer sad, and how shall I remain in trouble?" Lord, I understand this language, and I thank Thee. This marvellous tabernacle, which is Thy house, these songs of gladness joined to the pleasures of the banquet, what is it, Lord, but the Divine Eucharist? If the Eucharist comforts me, what shall afflict me? If the Eucharistic banquet rejoices me, who shall trouble me? If I come

even to the foot of the tabernacle, who will dare to say to me, Where is thy God?

The Eucharist, such is in effect the answer that the Christian is pleased to give to this question of the godless. He points to the tabernacle, and says, My God is there.

## VII.

Doubtless the God whom we worship, a vast and infinite Spirit, dwells in every place, and is present everywhere by His essence and by His power ; but for man, who is carnal and material, this presence, which the Spirit alone can recognize and be cognisant of, is not enough in the purpose and goodness of God.

One of the most essential principles to be considered in the study of Christianity is, that since man has a being composed of two substances, body and spirit, God has willed that the religion which governs our intercourse with Himself should address itself equally to the spirit and the senses.

So the Christian religion, which is the expression of this Divine thought, has ever held a middle path between the gross materialism which offers all to sense and the false spiritualism which forgets the senses altogether. Its principal dogma is the Incarnation, wherein, while our spirit adores an infinite God, our eyes contemplate the Divine flesh which is come to

dwell amongst us. To this chief dogma the whole economy of Christianity is attached and as it were enchain'd, so that in studying it we find everywhere a part for the soul and a part for the senses. To the spiritual nature of the soul responds the invisible grace which makes us beloved of God ; and to the senses respond the Sacraments, sensible and material signs of this grace. To the soul appertains prayer, and all the sentiments which raise it to God : and to the senses, external worship ; to the soul, to the intelligence, to the heart, correspond the metaphysical and moral proofs of religion : and to the senses the miracles which prove it in a sensible manner.

In like manner, then, as our spirit perceives the Divine Infinity, so it seemed good that our senses should be able to give an account of the exact place where God dwells. It is the Eucharist which points out to us this place ; and in regarding the tabernacle we may say with truth, God is there ; and after having known God in the Holy Eucharist, we may say with David, "Why art thou so heavy, O my soul ; and why art thou so disquieted within me ?" Our soul is doubtless pleased to contemplate the immensity of God everywhere and in all things ; but how much happier is she to be able to say at the Altar, God is there. It is there truly that her troubles are dispersed and her griefs consoled.

## VIII.

Thus, to speak correctly, it is in the Eucharist that the Christian finds his God ; to invoke Him he directs his looks not so much towards Heaven as towards the tabernacle ; to approach Him he approaches the Altar ; and therefore one may say that in some sense the whole life of the Christian is centred in the Eucharist.

We summed up in these three words the first verses of the Psalm on which we are meditating : the desire of God ; the coming to God ; the appearing before the presence of God.

The Christian soul delights to translate these three words thus : the desire of the Eucharist ; the receiving of the Eucharist ; living and dying in the presence of the Eucharist.

These three words, in fact, sum up the whole Christian life.

To desire the Eucharist is the commencement of it ; to arrive at the reception of the Eucharist is all its toil and endeavour ; to persevere in the Eucharist is its consolation and happiness.

The desire of the Eucharist is the beginning of the Christian life ; for how can any one wish to be a Christian without desiring to unite himself to Him Who is the Author and Finisher of our faith ? To arrive at the reception of the Eucharist is all the work of the Christian life ; for whither tend the efforts of the pious soul but

to render herself worthy of this holy Sacra-  
ment? To attain this end great duties are  
imposed upon her, lofty virtues are required of  
her: purity, humility, charity, patience. In this  
respect the Saviour's words are clear, and com-  
prehend all: "He that eateth Me, even he  
shall live by Me." Lastly, to persevere in  
the Eucharist is the happiness, and as it were  
the consummation of the Christian life; for to  
the loving soul that lives of the Eucharist, the  
Saviour's yoke is always easy and His burden  
always light. She no longer fears anything,  
because her Lord is with her. Walking in the  
presence of God, she goes on unto perfection,  
and preparing as many steps in her heart as she  
has enriched herself with well-made Com-  
muniions, she goes on from strength to strength

Ps. lxxxiv. 7. until she comes to Him Who  
reigneth in the citadel of Sion.

## IX.

It is then to the God of the Eucharist that  
we may apply the first words of our Psalm, and,  
venturing to interpret the inmost thoughts of the  
royal prophet, we may now say with him, "Like  
as the hart desireth the water-brooks, so longeth  
my soul after Thee, O Holy Eucharist." My soul  
is athirst for Thee, O faithful and lifegiving spring,  
that flowed from the opened heart of Jesu

on the Cross, and floweth in Divine streams over our Altars. O sacred wound ! O inebriating chalice, whose beauty ravishes me ! O wine that maketh the virgins to spring up ! When shall it be granted to me to come to Thee ? When shall I come ? When will my heart be pure enough, humble enough, loving enough to come to Thy tabernacle ? When will my eyes be turned from the vanities of the world and fixed only upon Thee ? When shall my life, perfected and absorbed in Thee, be only one with Thine, so that it shall no more be I that live, but Thou that livest in me ?

## X.

But though during the days of his pilgrimage upon earth the Christian is always sure to find his God at the tabernacle, and though the Sacrament of the Altar is sufficient for him to be no more troubled with the words of the godless, Where is thy God ? yet far be it from us to forget Heaven in the thought of the Eucharist, or to be hindered from repeating, with David, at the beginning of his Psalm, "When shall I come, O Lord, to appear before Thy presence?"

The Eucharist teaches the Christian to know God better, to love Him more, and to serve Him with more fervency. It sustains and delights him, even to the end of his existence. And then, when his last hour is come, he looks

for the last time with confidence to the Divine Victim, and exclaims, " May Jesus, Whom I still contemplate under these veils, now at length quench my burning thirst, and appearing unto me face to face, may I enjoy in Heaven the sight of His eternal glory."





## The Door of the Tabernacle.

“Sto ad ostium et pulso.”

“I stand at the door, and knock.”—*Rev.* iii. 20.



“STAND at the door, and knock!” Is it Jesus Christ who addresses us in these words? Is it He Who stands near us and asks us to open unto Him? Or is it we who are represented as speaking to our Saviour and our God, and who knock at His Divine threshold, striving to pierce the recesses of His sacred Heart?

It is doubtless Jesus Christ Who speaks first, for His grace ever prevents us. It is He Who solicits us. It is He Who waketh while we sleep. It is He Who seeks us when we go astray. It is He Who calls us when we are afar off. It is He Who stands at our door, the door of our heart, and knocks.

Yes; to reach the heart of man is the sole ambition of God. The gold and the silver are already His, and the possessions of the earth belong to Him. Man alone has the sad power

of withdrawing himself from His sway. But to possess man, God must reach his heart. The heart is that deep hiding-place where the frail majesty of our judgment shelters itself. Our limbs may bend beneath the yoke of slavery without our being slaves, for as long as our heart is free we are free ; but if our heart succumbs and obeys we are subdued. As long as our heart is of the world, we are of the world. When our heart is God's, we are God's. But the heart itself bestows itself ; no one does it violence, no one takes it by force ; it opens its door, it is not forced open ; and Divine Omnipotence itself pauses before this impenetrable threshold. God has made the heart of man so great that He has respect unto His own creation, and loves better Himself to bend before this dignity in us, that He may leave it whole, than to weaken its sovereignty by making it subservient to Himself. But the greater the heart of man the more worthy is it to be possessed by God. What then shall God do to make Himself Master of it ? God is patient, and He is good. He stands, He tells us, at the door of our heart, and knocks.

## II.

From the beginning God displayed to man all the wonders of creation ; He caused all the stars of the firmament to shine before his eyes ; He enchanted man's ears with all the harmonies of

nature ; He fed him with all the fruits of the earth, and delighted him with all its fragrance. In speaking thus to our senses God knocks at the door of our heart. For the things which are seen, says the Apostle, are made by God only to lead us to understand the things that are not seen. Happy would man have been if the sight of creation had led him to the worship and love of the Creator ! But this has not been the case ; and man, in his folly, opened his heart to the created works without letting it penetrate to the knowledge of their Author.

Then He Who stands at the door of our heart took flesh like ours ; He was born humbly in a manger, He was cradled on the knees of an earthly mother ; and while still in swaddling clothes He smiled upon the world. He showed Himself full of gentleness and goodness. He would not break the bruised reed nor quench the smoking flax. He went about doing good ; He suffered without complaining ; and He died to procure our pardon. Ah ! what end did the Saviour propose to Himself in His birth and in His life, in His words and His miracles, in His sufferings and His death ? He had one thing only in view : to stand at the door of our heart, and knock.

### III.

And yet, so closely connected with our nature and our sufferings as He was by His Incarnation

and His passion, Jesus Christ willed to stand still nearer to the door of our heart. He has hidden Himself under the humble appearance of bread and wine. He has spread His Table of Mystery, and has said to us all, "Take, eat ; this is My Body. Drink ye ; this is My Blood." Does He not here say to us still more expressively and still more lovingly, "I stand at the door, and knock"?

From our earliest years Jesus thus meets us on the way. He stands at the door and knocks, even on the very threshold of our youth : and while life is still young, and innocent, and pure, the heart opens itself with readiness and joy to Him ; and when in His Divine impatience Jesus Christ penetrates at length the heart which He has formed, the heart which He has loved, the heart which He has longed for, happy is the child who lives faithful to the Divine Guest Whom he has received, and who by the power of His indwelling grows up into a perfect man, even to the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ.

But alas ! how many there are who open the door of their hearts at first to Jesus Christ, but afterwards say, like the children of Israel, "Our soul loatheth this light bread." But Num. xxi. 5. does Jesus give up seeking to dwell in them? No ; He still stands near them and knocks.

You may have driven Him from your heart ; you may have preferred before Him this guilty

passion, or this incessant pre-occupation in the interests of this life, its hateful prejudices and its false doctrines, the bustle of the world and the tumult of the age. The Lord is not in these, it is true ; but look around you, and near to you, and you will still find Him standing at the door and knocking : Christ in this holy mother who prays for you and weeps over you ; Christ in the sweet recollection of your brighter years ; Christ in that book whose pages your young hands used to turn ; Christ in this disappointment that crushes you down, in this grief that oppresses you ; Jesus Christ always and everywhere, standing by all the events of your life and knocking.

Your forgetfulness discourages Him not, your passions scare Him not away, your scorn disconcerts Him not. When you are laughing amid your festivities He is making intercessions for you with groanings which cannot be uttered ; and when you proudly resist, He humbly insists with his Divine appeals. He awaits your hour which shall be His ; He is never weary ; and if at the last hour, when your heart is ceasing to beat, you open it but once for the last time, your God, Who loves you, hastens in and lodges there. He comes to you not as a judge, but as a friend ; not as a tyrant, but as a father : and He says to you, “ Let us rejoice together ; for thou who art My son wert dead and art alive again ! It is I, Who am the resurrection and the life.”

## IV.

But if Jesus Christ, preventing our good desires and outstripping our good will, repeats to us under every circumstance of life, "I stand at the door of your heart, and knock," should not these same words be found also in like manner on our lips? Should not we too, in our turn, say, "Lord, I stand at Thy door, and knock"? This language is in our mouths that of humility, and it is also that of prayer. It is the language of humility; for the goodness of God cannot make us forget our vileness and our nothingness. And the more that He in His mercy condescends to prevent us, the more ought we in respectful humility to go forth to meet the disposition of His love.

When Mary, leaping for joy and led by the Divine Son Whom she carried in her womb, went to visit Elizabeth, it was assuredly Jesus Christ Who preceded His precursor and first knocked to come to him. And yet Elizabeth in humbleness of heart cried out, "Whence is this unto me, that the mother of my Lord should come unto me?" As if she had said, It was rather for me and for my son to forestall your love, to stand humbly at your feet, and to knock at the threshold of Him Who is the Life and the Salvation of the world.

When Jesus Christ said to the centurion, I will go and heal thy sick servant, already He

seemed to stand at the door of that house, and one might say that He had knocked for admittance in order to bring health and happiness to the sick man. And yet the centurion was right in staying Jesus, and saying unto Him, Lord, I am not worthy that Thou shouldest come under my roof ; it is rather for me to forestall Thee, and to knock at the door of Thy heart : let this heart but speak one word, and my servant shall be healed. Matt. viii. 8.

So again, when the publican stood at the entrance to the temple, not daring so much as to lift up his eyes, assuredly the Lord had already forestalled him by His grace, and had said in secret to him, I stand at the door of thy heart, and knock. Yet it was needful that the humility of the publican should in his turn knock at the door of the heart of God, and should cause Him to hear those words, "Lord, have mercy upon me a sinner." And thus when Divine grace and the humility of repentance meet together, calling the one to the other, and saying to each other, "I stand at the door, and knock," the sinner is presently converted, and he returns and goes down to his house justified.

"I stand at the door, and knock." It is also the language of prayer—prayer, that sovereign power which God resists not, which raises the soul towards Him, and causes Him to come down to it, and which thus restores to our hands all the riches of Heaven. But if prayer is powerful,

Jesus Christ warns us that it is not heard unless  
 Luke xi. 9. it is importunate. And how shall this  
 opportunity be expressed? Wishing  
 to teach man how he ought to pray, the Saviour  
 said first, "Ask, and ye shall receive." But this  
 first injunction does not complete all His thought:  
 "Seek," He continues, "and ye shall find." Yet  
 even this second condition that He has imposed  
 does not seem to suffice: "Knock," at last adds  
 the Divine Master, "Knock, and it shall be  
 opened unto you." Yes; prayer stands humbly  
 at the threshold of the Divine Majesty; it knocks  
 by its sighs, by its tears, by its importunity, by  
 its efforts, which nothing wearies; it knocks,  
 and it is opened unto it.

And lastly, as it is principally of the Holy Eucharist that it may be said that Jesus Christ stands and knocks at the door of our heart, so is it at the foot of the Altar that we love above all to say, "Lord, I stand at Thy door and knock."

He Whom that door separates from us is the Creator of Heaven and earth, the Saint of Saints, and the Lord of Lords. How shall we cross this Divine threshold? "Tremble," says the prophet, "at the approach of My sanctuary." Pause we then with a holy dread, with a holy respect. We stand at the door. For it is Very God Who in His infinite goodness humbles Himself even to us, Who suffers little children to come unto Him, and Who has said to all men, "Come unto Me, all ye

that are weary and are heavy-laden, and I will refresh you." Let us then no longer remain inactive ; with humility, but also with confidence, ardour, and perseverance, let us knock at this door, until it shall be opened unto us.

V.

Thus the words on which we have been meditating are some of those which we may well remember at each celebration of the Holy Communion. When we approach the Holy Table let us first hear Jesus Christ saying to us, "I stand at the door of thy heart and knock. I came down to earth, and am hidden beneath these veils, only to be nearer to thee : a very little distance is yet between us ; hasten thou to fill it, and open to Me thy heart, in order that I may rest and dwell in thee, that I may lavish all My treasures upon thee, that I may pour out upon thee the abundance of My love and mercy." And then immediately let us reply, "Lord, am not I unworthy that Thou shouldest enter under my roof ? But let me stand at the threshold of Thy Tabernacle and knock. My heart is too straitened to receive Thee, but Thine is large and deep enough for me to hide and shelter myself there : in Thee already I desire to live ; with Thee I wish to act ; for Thee I am ever willing to sacrifice myself and to die."

O moment full of joy when the soul, in the full burst of its prayer, forces the door of the Sacred Heart of Jesus ; and when Jesus, in the full burst of His love, forces the door of our heart ! We knock no more, and Christ knocks no longer, for He enters us and we Him. He is in us and we in Him. And the prayer that the Divine Son uttered in the Upper Chamber at Jerusalem is accomplished : "I am in them, as Thou, Father, art in Me, that they all may be one in Us."





## Esther.

“Si regi placet, obsecro ut venias ad me, ad convivium quod paravi.”

“If it seem good unto the king, let the king come unto the banquet that I have prepared for him.”—*Esther v. 4.*



HE fifth chapter of the book of Esther is the story of the solemn interview between the saintly Queen and the king Ahasuerus.

After she had fasted three days and three nights, Esther, says the Holy Scripture, “put on her royal apparel, and stood in the inner court of the king’s house, over against the king’s house; and the king sat upon his royal throne, in the royal house, over against the gate of the house. And it was so, when the king saw Esther the queen standing in the court, that she obtained favour in his sight, and the king held out to Esther the golden sceptre that was in his hand; so Esther drew near and touched the top of the sceptre. Then said the king unto her, What wilt thou, Queen Esther? and what is thy request? it shall be even given thee to the half of the kingdom.” Esther v. 1—3. demanded nothing of the king except the honour

of receiving him at her table. The king came to the banquet, and then, a second time addressing Esther, he said, "What is thy petition? and it shall be granted thee; and what is thy request? even to the half of the kingdom it shall be performed." Esther repeated her petition, and besought Ahasuerus to come to the banquet that she had prepared. The king obeyed this second appeal, and in the midst of the banquet repeated his question for the third time and said, "Tell me, Esther, what wilt thou? it shall be performed, even to the half of the kingdom." Then the saintly queen, emboldened by such kindness, cried out, "If I have found favour in thy sight, O king, and if it please the king, let my life be given me at my petition, and my people at my request." Ahasuerus delayed not to perform his promise; at the close of the day the wicked Haman was condemned to death, and the people of Israel were saved.

## II.

I opened the Holy Volume at this place when I was one day worshipping before Thy Altar, O God, whereon Thou wert exposed in splendour. The sanctuary was adorned with its richest ornaments, the veil was removed from the tabernacle, and one might have said that mystery was revealed. Seated on a throne of flowers and light, the God of the Eucharist appeared as a king in the splendour of his magnificence and power.

Then, indeed, the history of Esther seemed sweet to meditate upon.

One of the thoughts which are most pleasing to holy souls, and which lead them with the greatest happiness to the feet of Jesus exposed in the Sacrament of His love, is that then He shows Himself to them in order to admit them nearer to His person, and to hear their prayers more readily, and to scatter His favours more abundantly among them. It is a King who gives them audience, but a King who comes to them full of sweetness. "Behold, thy King cometh unto thee meek." In the tabernacle Matt. xxi. 5. He remains hidden in a secret hiding-place, and is accessible only to the angels. Alas ! we stand then at the door and knock, and our eyes, like those of the royal Apoc. iii. 20. prophet, "fail" in presence of the hidden Word, saying, "Oh, when wilt Thou come Psalm cxix. 82. fort me ?" But when Jesus goes forth from His mysterious palace, He takes His place upon His throne, and calls the faithful around Him ; then with what homage is He not surrounded ! He remains humbly veiled, it is true ; but our love enlightens these shadows, and our piety shines across the obscurity. To celebrate more fully His glory we have recourse to the whole universe ; the brightest flowers bloom for Him, and our sweetest songs praise Him. Like the Magi kings, we offer to our King, the King of kings, our gold, our frankincense, and

our myrrh. The magnificence of our external worship becomes the vesture of His hidden majesty. Shall not, then, the pious soul, when admitted thus into His presence, remember Esther as she approached King Ahasuerus ? Yes, Jesus Christ is truly a King, and He assigns this title to Himself when He is about to die, as He said to Pilate, "I am a King." Doubtless His royalty was obscured at the time of His Passion, as it would be afterwards in His Sacrament ; but under the veil of the Sacrament, as under the purple rag and the thorny crown, we cannot mistake His august dignity. We say with Himself, "A greater than Solomon is here,"—greater than Solomon by reason of His infinite wisdom, and the Divine splendour which surrounds Him in heaven. Why, then, should we not, in like manner, add, "A greater than Ahasuerus is here,—greater than Ahasuerus by reason of His power, and of the liberality of His gifts "?

The sacred penman tells us that Ahasuerus had forbidden anyone to come into his presence under the most severe penalties. Esther herself hesitates some time before confronting the king ; and in this connection Ahasuerus is rather the figure of the God of Israel, of whom the people said to Moses, "Let not God speak unto us lest we die."

Oh ! how much better is Jesus Christ, and how much more inviting is this King. "Come unto Me, all ye," He says to us ; and He adds, "It is I ; be not afraid." Let us beware, however, lest

we abuse a goodness which invites us, but which, at the same time, compels us. Let us not think that, because we are called, we shall all be equally chosen. Let us remember the guest who was driven from the marriage feast because he had not on a wedding garment. Finally, let us not hope to please the Divine Ahasuerus, nor to be admitted to His presence, if we do not resemble Esther.

### III.

It is here that we ought to study this sweet and saintly figure, which is presented to us as one of the most perfect types of the Eucharistic soul.

Holy Scripture portrays Esther to us in two words : she was “fair and beautiful,” and “obtained favour in the sight of all them that looked upon her.” A supernatural beauty, which captivates the love of the great king ; and a loving and gracious beauty, which charms every heart. Such was Esther. But is not this also the image of the pious soul ? Above all the glittering splendours of the earth, there is a beauty which God prefers to all others,—it is the beauty of a soul. At first God created the soul by His breath, and He made it so beautiful that He could call it His likeness. A second time God re-created the soul by His Blood, and He made it again this second time so beautiful that He called it His spouse and His sister. O incredible beauty of the Christian soul      Cant. iv. 9.

a beauty which the eyes of men see not, but which the angels admire, and which God has loved with an eternal love : thou alone hast discovered the secret of pleasing the eyes of the Most High ; and thou hast need of no other ornament. It is thyself alone that God loveth in thee. Leave Esther's companions to have recourse to strange ornaments. "Many daughters," says the wise man, "have done virtuously [heaped up vain riches—*marg.*] ; but thou, O Christian soul, thou who art poor but beautiful, excellest them all." When Jesus Christ  
 Prov. xxxi. 29. accepted the hospitality of the two sisters, both of them sought to please Him ; but Martha arrayed herself with useless solicitude ; Mary, who had only the beauty of a loving soul, had chosen the better part.

And yet the soul which has pleased God because of its beauty must also, like Esther, show itself good, gracious, and loving in the eyes of all. For such is the external and visible character of true piety ; the beauty of the soul is altogether  
 Psalm xlvi. 13. internal,—"the king's daughter is all glorious within" ; but gentleness and goodness are the visible reflexion which betray the splendour that is invisible.

We have now revealed the true Ahasuerus and the true Esther; Jesus Christ, the King of kings, seated upon His Eucharistic throne, and the Christian soul that is well-pleasing to Him and presents herself before Him. She presents herself

after days of penitence and fasting ; for as long as the bride is deprived of the Bride-groom she fasts and mourns. And yet with no self-confidence she presents herself in an attitude of humility ; she stands at the door like the publican ; she dares not cross the threshold of the King's chamber ; and desirous as she is to attract the King to the banquet which she has prepared, she repeats with the centurion, "Lord, I am not worthy that Thou shouldest come under my roof." But Ahasuerus from His throne on high perceives her, and immediately stretches out to her the sceptre of gold. When we think upon the golden sceptre of King Ahasuerus, the sign of clemency and mercy, must we not think of the golden sceptre of Jesus Christ, even His holy Cross ? On Calvary it was an instrument of torture ; but now in the hands of the King of kings, it is an instrument of glory. To the wicked and ungodly it will become at the day of judgment the terrible sign of justice ; but upon earth, where every day it stretches forth its arms to us, it is the sign of Divine pardon. If we are weak and weary, it is "the rod and staff" that comforts us, as the prophet expresses it ; and if in humble timidity we dare not approach God, it invites and calls us. Above the tabernacle glitters the cross, the golden sceptre of Ahasuerus. But alas ! all know not, like Esther, how to touch it with affection. Many despise the

cross, many dread the cross, many fly from the cross ; let us rather embrace it with love, and allow ourselves to be guided by it.

## IV.

Esther is now before Ahasuerus, and it is the time of that solemn interview. Let us listen with our hearts, and try to catch the mysteries that each word and each act reveal to us. Is it from Esther's mouth that the first word comes forth ? No ; Ahasuerus prevents her. He cannot contain himself at the sight of her, and cries out, " What wilt thou, Queen Esther, and what is thy request ? and it shall be performed, even to the half of the kingdom." But Esther has but one wish, and she hastens to express it. " If I have found favour in the sight of the king," she says, " let the king come to the banquet that I have prepared."

Here let us pause and meditate. Every time we present ourselves before the Eucharistic throne to receive the Holy Communion, do we not in some measure follow Esther's steps ? Like her, we prepare ourselves by penitence and fasting : like her, we are clothed with the royal robe of innocence. Like her too, we tremble at the approach of the thrice holy King : and like her, we are reassured by the merciful sign of the cross. Then we advance with confidence to the Altar ; but before we have uttered our prayer to God, He

has already prevented us, and said unto us, as Ahasuerus did to Esther, "What wilt thou, and what is thy request? It shall be even given thee to the half of My kingdom." What liberality and what goodness! It is always God who speaks first, and He requires of us but one thing, that we should ask of Him. And as if to put our prayers more at ease, He Himself points out to us how far they may go. Ah! it is not only the half of the kingdom that He promises us; hear Him in His Holy Gospel: "When thou prayest, say, Our Father, Which art in heaven. Thy Kingdom come." O liberality, O goodness, too little appreciated, too little known! God beseeches us, and we beseech not Him. We know not to groan for our wants, and God "maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered." Our longings Rom. viii. 26. reach not even to the lowest place in the mansion of our heavenly Father, and He says, "Ask of Me My Kingdom, and I will give it unto thee."

But it is not so with the faithful soul of which Esther is the type. She has but one thought, she makes but one petition, and she knows beforehand what will be the object of her request. "If it seem good unto the King," she exclaims as she approaches the Holy Table, "let the King come to the banquet which I have prepared." As if she had said, "Thou, O Lord, offerest me the half of Thy kingdom. But what is there in Heaven, in all the extent of Thy empire, or what

is there upon earth in all the immensity of Thy creation, for me? It is Thee alone that I desire, O God of my heart. When the thirsty hart desires the water-brooks, what to him are the thick forests, or the green hills, or the lofty bushes? He desires and seeks only the water-brooks. And so I too, Lord, sigh only for Thee, and ask for Thee alone : and entreat Thee to come to the banquet which I have prepared."

## V.

Ahasuerus obeyed Esther, and faithfully accepted her invitation, but Esther's banquet offers only earthly food, and Ahasuerus appears there only as a guest. Let us hasten to pierce the shadows of the symbol, and to enter into all the splendour of the Eucharistic reality.

Jesus Christ, the King of kings, obeys also the faithful soul that invites Him : but He wills to be for it at once the ready guest and the immortal food. As a guest He deigns to sit at this table of the Cenacle, which has been ever spread for eighteen hundred years : there He holds converse with us and permits us, like S. John, to rest our head upon His heart ; but He is at once the guest and the banquet. Taking bread into His holy and venerable hands, He blesses it, He breaks it, and distributes it, saying, " Eat, this is My Body." And then taking the chalice in like manner, He blesses it, and offers it, saying,

“ This is My Blood.” And it is then that the soul, in company with its royal Spouse, takes part in this unspeakable repast, of which it is said, “ It shall yield royal dainties.” Gen. xl ix. 20. But who then has prepared the faithful soul, and how has she dared to say, “ I entreat you, O King, to come to the banquet which I have prepared”? for it seems that here is the Divine King Who disposes all things, it is He Who foresees all things, it is He Who gives all things : without Him neither the furrows of our fields could produce the wheat of the elect, nor the vines of our hills this heavenly wine. And we say, “ I entreat Thee, O King, to come to the banquet which I have prepared for Thee.”

Let us remember that when Jesus Christ willed to eat the Passover for the last time with His disciples, He took Peter and John apart, and said unto them, “ Make ready for us that we may eat the Passover.” And they went according to their Master’s word, and addressed themselves to a man who introduced them into a large room furnished for that purpose. There they made ready the Passover. There, too, Jesus Christ came and instituted the Eucharist.

The Saviour continues every day to pursue the same course with regard to us. He wills that we should prepare for Him a large chamber, and that we should furnish it as well as we can to receive Him. What is this chamber but our heart? Let us expand it by charity ; let us purify

it from all defilement by a chaste life ; let us adorn it with those loving virtues whose odour shall fill the house better than that of Mary's ointment. He will ask of us nothing more ; Jesus Christ will come to us, and will cause us to sit down with Him at the Eucharistic Table.

## VI.

It was doubtless a great joy for Esther to have thus received at her table her spouse and her king, and yet the conclusion of the history shows us that the Queen's invitation was but the means of gaining the favour of the prince, and of obtaining from him the final request which she was looking forward to. She repeats her invitation three times, and it is only in the midst of the banquet that she makes known to Ahasuerus the true object of her desire ; "O King," she says to him, "if I have found grace in thy sight, save me and my people."

What useful lessons we may gather from hence !

The successive invitations of Esther to Ahasuerus were for her a means ; and so is the Holy Communion for us.

The Communion is doubtless a noble end for our soul (and what better end can we assign here below to our hopes and our exertions, than to unite ourselves closely to God in the Sacrament of the Eucharist ?) ; but it is at the same time the

surest, the most excellent means to bring us the favour of God, and to reach to the highest end of our existence, which is the salvation of our soul and everlasting happiness. If we wish to be saved, let us communicate often. Esther, as we have seen, does not limit herself to a first invitation of Ahasuerus ; and thrice afterwards, when the prince renews his protestations and his offers, she never asks of him but one thing, to come to the banquet which she has prepared. O should not this petition of Esther's be that of all souls who communicate ? Yes ! when you approach your God, and when that inner voice which you know so well says to you, " What wilt thou, and what is thy request ? " then make answer like Esther, " Lord, if it pleaseth Thee, come again soon to me : to-day I have communicated, but grant that I may communicate again soon."

This first prayer, which God will hear fervently, will make of more effect all that you shall address to Him. When He has deigned to condescend to your prayers, so as even to come often into your soul, can you think that He will refuse you when you ask of Him that this soul, indwelt by Him, purified and enriched by Him, may be saved ?

## VII.

Marvellous is the economy of God's dealings with men ! Esther is but a simple Jewish

maiden, but faithful to her God, and submissive to His commands. By following with docility the mysterious ways that are opened to her, she becomes a great saint in the midst of an idolatrous court, and shatters the pride of Haman, and secures the salvation of her people. O Eucharistic soul, O true Esther, thy destinies are not less noble. Lowly and hidden in the midst of men, God hath loved thee and chosen thee from all eternity, and it is for this that He hath given thee a beauty so heavenly. Take confidence in this beauty, and thou shalt be happy and shalt reign. *Species tua, et pulchritudine tua, intende, prospere, procede, et regna.*

Ps. xliv. 5. But have no other ambition, take no other care, than to please the Divine King. Listen not to the false prophets, who will say to you, "He is here, or He is there." You know well where you will always find Him, at the tabernacle and the altar. There besiege Him with your assiduous solicitations, and above all things ask Him to come down from His throne even unto you. May the Communion be your life! And when you have communicated, desire nothing more than to communicate again. Thus, to use an expression of the royal prophet, "You will go forth in the strength of the Lord Ps. lxxi. 14. God;" and you will acquire an immense power over His heart.

Then, O holy soul, set no bounds to your prayers for yourself. Pray also for your people,

the people of God, the Church of Jesus Christ. Haman is unceasingly warring against it, and in his foolish pride he thinks himself sure of victory. Who shall protect us, who shall save us? Neither the valour of the brave, nor the wisdom of the wise, but rather, believe me, Communion and Prayer. O lowly and hidden soul, O pious and faithful soul, O Eucharistic soul, O Esther, arise; communicate and pray, and the enemies of God will be scattered,  
Esther viii. 16. and the Church will see new days shining upon her, days of glory and of joy.





## The Eucharistic Union.

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"Templum Dei sanctum est quod estis vos."  
"The Temple of God is holy, which temple ye are."—  
I Cor. iii. 17.

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**O**NE morning I entered a Church. The priest stood at the altar where the Holy Sacrifice is offered. Above the altar rose the Tabernacle where Jesus reposes under His most mysterious veils; and above the tabernacle a magnificent monstrance displayed the glorious and triumphant Victim for the worship of the faithful.

Kneeling in silence, I was contemplating the altar, the tabernacle, the monstrance, and looking with loving thoughts from one to the other. Ah! said I to myself, what a beautiful subject for meditation, the altar, the tabernacle, and the monstrance! The altar whereon Jesus offers Himself, the tabernacle where Jesus hides Himself, the monstrance where Jesus manifests Himself! Do not these three sum up as it were in three words the whole life of the Saviour? A sacrifice the most perfect, a humility the most profound, a manifestation the most sublime.

If I meditate upon the suffering life of the Saviour from the earliest sorrows of the cradle to the prayer at Golgotha, at the altar I find Him as a Victim offering Himself every day for me.

If I consider Jesus Christ hidden in the pure womb of His Mother, hidden at Bethlehem and at Nazareth, and afterwards fleeing from the crowd that gathered around His path and enveloping in shade and silence His miracles and blessings, is He not in the Tabernacle still more humble, more silent, more hidden ?

And lastly, if I contemplate Him Who called Himself the Light of the world, and Who compared Himself to a city set upon a hill ; Who, by the splendour of His virtues and the power of His words, has regenerated the universe ; Who, from the highest Heavens where He reigns, rules over ages and generations, I think that I see Him appearing in all His triumphant pomp amid the golden rays of the monstrance.

## II.

Jesus Christ has established His Eucharistic life in these three abodes, the altar, the tabernacle, and the monstrance. He seems there to continue that life which He began in the midst of us ; and it would be a sweet and holy work for the Christian soul to study in the Holy Gospels what acts and words of the Saviour correspond to His life at the altar, the tabernacle, and the monstrance.

Does not Jesus Christ repeat every day at the altar His eternal word, "Sacrifice and offering  
 Heb. x. 5. Thou wouldest not, but a Body hast  
 I come"? Do you not hear Him at the tabernacle giving us this excellent lesson, "Learn  
 Matt. xi. 29. of Me, for I am meek and lowly  
 in heart"?

Does He not fulfil from the monstrance the promise which He made to men, "And I, if I  
 John xii. 32. be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto Me"?

But if the Eucharistic life of the Saviour is spent at the altar, the tabernacle, and amidst the rays of the monstrance, it is not consummated there; it seeks eagerly for other limits; it finds its final aim in the heart of man. Yes, Jesus offers Himself on the altar only to breathe out His life upon my heart. Jesus waits at the tabernacle only that He may reach my heart. Jesus elevates Himself in the monstrance only that He may come down even to my heart.

But then what a comforting thought! If Jesus wills to dwell in my heart as He dwells on the altar, the tabernacle, and the monstrance, does it not follow that my heart ought itself to be an altar, a tabernacle, a monstrance?

Lord, I recollect with delight this thought wherewith Thou inspirlest me. I recall the words  
 r Cor. iii. 17. of Thy Apostle, "The temple of God is holy, which temple ye are,"

this temple, and not an empty temple. I possess within myself an altar, a tabernacle, a monstrance, even my heart. My heart is the altar whereon Jesus offers Himself, the tabernacle where Jesus hides Himself, the monstrance where He manifests Himself.

## III.

i. The Altar whereon Jesus offers Himself. We know already that Communion consummates the awful sacrifice, and that the Eucharist loses its mysterious existence only in the heart that receives it. It is then a kind of sacrifice which seems to be accomplished in us. Communion is, like the Sacrifice, a memorial of the death of Jesus. And one might say that it pleased Jesus thus daily to die in us, in order that He might daily repeat to us these words, "Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends." John xv. 13.

But, at the same time, how great a lesson is there here for us ! Jesus desires not only to offer Himself on the altar of our heart, but He desires other sacrifices there,—our guilty desires, our wicked passions, our iniquities of every kind. If the Saviour of the world submitted Himself to death on Calvary, and offered Himself as the chiefest victim of propitiation for all men, it was because He was made like one of us, because God the Father sent Him in the likeness of sin,

and because, as the Apostle expresses it, "He made Him to be sin for us." On  
**2 Cor. v. 21.** that account God hath smitten Him,  
**Rom. viii. 3.** and as S. Paul says again, "hath condemned sin in the flesh." But what then? Shall the likeness of sin be smitten in Jesus Christ, and the reality spared in us? Oh! let us not flatter ourselves with this hope. We ourselves, adds the Apostle, ought to put to death, to mortify, the deeds of the flesh; and on this condition alone can we live again with Jesus Christ.

But it is, in the first place, by repentance and by penitence that this sacrifice must be offered in us; and this is precisely the sacrifice which when offered by us is pleasing to God, as the prophet says, and which we ought to unite in our heart to that of Jesus Christ: "The sacrifice of God is a troubled spirit."

To this sacrifice let us join the voluntary and resigned acceptance of all the sufferings, labours, and pain of this life. Jesus Christ died in the midst of sorrows; and even as in dying on the Cross He requires of us that we should die to sin, so in suffering on Calvary He wills to leave to us a part in His Passion. As if there were something wanting to this Divine Passion, which **Col. i. 24.** it is for us to complete, as the Apostle says. Alas! our heart is an altar where this offering of suffering is renewed every moment, and Jesus Christ asks of us only to unite it to His own.

Oh ! how lofty is this doctrine ! But how little is it understood by our base and guilty nature ! We make indeed an altar of our heart, but burn thereon only unlawful incense, and sacrifice there too often to false gods our conscience and the commandments of God's law. Far from us, Lord, be this unhallowed worship ! Thou hast prepared in me an altar for Thy Divine worship alone, and now I know what are the victims that ought to be offered there. It is to make the offering of these more easy to me that Thou comest in each Communion to breathe out Thy life upon my heart. No longer will I refuse Thee the victims which Thy sacrifice demands of me. How sweet to me to suffer, when the Eucharist recalls to me the recollection of Thy sufferings. How sweet to me to die to myself, since the Eucharist consummates itself in me.

## IV.

2. My heart is a tabernacle where Jesus Christ hides Himself. When God willed to create a dwelling-place for the angels, He extended beneath them the vault of the firmament of Heaven ; and when He willed to create a dwelling-place for Himself, He made man's heart. The Tabernacle wherein He rests in our churches is for Him only a place of waiting, of expectation ; the end at which He aims is our heart. The further He is from the bottom of it, the more He

wishes to descend ; the less directly He is united to us, the more He wishes to exhibit to us His love. Holy Communion is the limit whereby His humility is bounded and His love is satisfied. An intimate life with us is His sole desire. The noise that we make in the world does not attract Him. The brilliancy with which we shine does not invite Him. But far from the bustle and the pomp it pleases Him to come down to us, within us, and for us alone, to probe our sharpest wounds, to communicate to us His most precious graces, and to be consumed within us in His holy mysteries.

Lord, Thou art my sweetest secret, and I will keep Thee deep within my heart, but at the same time I will listen to Thy voice, for from the depths of this tabernacle that Thou hast chosen Thou hast given me wonderful instructions.

Jesus Christ makes my heart the tabernacle where He dwells. What more can I desire ? If I should gain the whole world, could I possess more than the Creator of the world ? Up to the present time my heart has been divided, and I have made there two tabernacles, one for Thee, O my God, and the other for Thy creatures. Fool that I was, when Thou art so great, and my heart is so small ! I will reserve myself henceforth for the Infinite alone. Jesus Christ makes my heart the tabernacle where He dwells. He, Who is my chiefest good, my riches, my happiness, is within me. Why search elsewhere for

good, for riches, or happiness? If I should wing my flight to all the winds of Heaven, if I should probe the bowels of the earth, if I should ask of the waves of the ocean, neither the Heavens, nor the ocean, nor the earth could give me that which is within me. Where my treasure is there is my heart; and where my heart is, I wish that there should be my greatest treasure.

But this tabernacle where Jesus Christ dwells is at the same time that wherein He hides Himself. Shall I then love to show myself? Shall I not rather seek to conceal myself from every eye? He Who is the beauty of Heaven hides Himself under mystical appearances, and He loses even these when He annihilates Himself in me; and shall I adorn myself with the empty trappings of the world, and be ambitious of its praise! Alas! The heart of man too often resembles the whitened sepulchre of which the Gospel speaks, which parades its beauty externally, and contains within nothing but dust and ashes. My heart must be quite the opposite of this; it must love to be hidden, and to be accounted as nothing; and its glory must be all within, like that of the daughter of Zion. The glory which is within me is Jesus Christ, Whose tabernacle I am become.

Lord, now I understand both the favours that Thou conferrest upon me in hiding Thyself in me, and the lessons that Thou thus teachest me. But what ought I not to do on my part to prepare

my heart for Thy coming? Ah! assuredly I am not worthy that Thou shouldest enter into my house. The tabernacles of thy churches are adorned with precious metals, and I have neither gold nor silver, but that which is in me I will offer unto Thee, such as I have I will give unto Thee. Thou Thyself hast taken care to point out to me that which Thou requirest of me, in order that I may become Thy dwelling-place. If any man loveth Me, Thou sayest, he will keep My words, and My Father will love him, and We will come unto him, and make Our abode with him. Lord, I feel that I love Thee, that I wish to be obedient to Thy law. My heart can then receive Thee. Come, Lord Jesus, come.

## V.

3. The heart is the monstrance where Jesus manifests Himself. The heart is in effect the principle of the Christian life.

“Philosophy,” says S. Jerome, “has placed the soul in the brain; Jesus Christ shews that it is in the heart:” “*Plato posuit in cerebro, Christus demonstrat in corde.*”

From the heart, says the Gospel, proceed both good and evil. It is from the heart that the Christian life proceeds, and this is in itself but the reproduction of Jesus Christ in us. But let us not forget that if Jesus Christ comes into our heart it is not only to hide Himself

there and to annihilate Himself there ; it is above all to live there a new life in us ; it is to manifest Himself outwardly, and in all our conduct ; it is to continue in our actions the perpetual manifestation of His works.

Such was the thought of the Saviour in instituting the Holy Eucharist. He gives us His flesh to eat, but in order that being filled by it we may live and act in the world as He did. He sows Divine seeds in our souls in order that this seed may produce Divine fruit in us. He entrusts to us "the secret of the King" only on condition that we "reveal the works of God." Tob. xii. 7. He speaks to our ears, but He requires that "what we hear in the ear, we should preach upon the house-tops." Finally, He hides Himself in us as in a tabernacle, but He wills to shine forth in all our actions, like the Host amid the rays of the monstrance. Matt. x. 27.

This is a doctrine eminently practical, but unhappily little understood. People love to receive Jesus Christ in the Holy Communion, but they know not how to manifest Him after they have received Him. They hide the sweet and patient Jesus at the bottom of their heart, but they do not let the sweetness and patience of the God Whom they possess appear outwardly. They hide within themselves Jesus obedient unto death, but the obedience of Jesus never manifests itself in the fulfilment of their duties. Alas !

we act towards the God of the Eucharist as the slothful servant did with his master's talent. The talent lay buried in the ground, and produced neither reward nor virtue.

O Lord, grant that it may not be so with me. Having become through Communion the tabernacle of the thrice holy God, I should have but one desire, that of manifesting openly, by my works, the glory of the God Who is hidden in me.

## VI.

When I left the Church where I had been meditating, I cast one last look towards the altar, the tabernacle, and the monstrance ; and then, searching again the depths of my heart, I culled these three thoughts : How easy would be the sacrifice of my passions, and how sweet my sufferings, if I were to remember that my heart is the altar whereon Jesus Christ offers Himself ! How easily could I flee from the world, and love the hidden life, were I to recollect that my heart is the tabernacle where Jesus Christ hides Himself ! How entirely Christian would be my life, and how would it glorify God, if I never forgot that my heart ought to resemble the monstrance where Jesus Christ manifests Himself !



## The Two Communions.

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“The good take, the bad take,  
But with portion widely differing,  
Unto life or unto death :  
'Tis death to wicked, life to good ;  
See how, of like teaching,  
Th' issue widely differeth.”

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**T**his principally in the Cenacle, or Upper Chamber at Jerusalem where our Blessed Lord kept the Passover with His disciples, that we must study the Holy Eucharist. It is there that Jesus Christ Himself, the Great High Priest of the New Law, pronounced those sacred words which are the foundation and constitution of our faith in the doctrine of this most Holy Sacrament. It is there that, in that wonderful discourse in John vi., He causes us to penetrate the inmost sense of this Divine mystery. It is there also that, reuniting His Twelve Apostles, and distributing to all of them His own Body and Blood, He communicates them for the first time. All are partakers of the sacred banquet, but all have not the same

disposition towards It, and all do not derive from It the same fruit.

Here is an important lesson, and one upon which we cannot meditate too much.

In order to understand it better, let us take two Apostles, Judas and John. The former finds death in the Eucharist; the latter derives from it true life. The example of the former is to be feared; that of the latter is to be imitated. Let us trace the history of these two Communions.

Judas was an Apostle, and by his title had been, like the rest of the Twelve, the object of his Divine Master's love. How had Jesus Christ called him? Perhaps he had cast upon him one of those unspeakable looks which none can resist, or perhaps He had addressed to him one of those touching words which attracted all hearts. He had made him a witness of His greatest miracle, and had even given him a special proof of His confidence by bestowing upon him the charge of His humble treasury; and finally, when about to die, wishing to give to those whom He loved so much a still greater proof of His love, He had invited him to take part in the feast of the Upper Chamber.

Here certainly was immeasurable grace, but grace which obliged to fidelity. Let us follow Judas into the Upper Chamber, and study his present dispositions.

It seems that the Divine Master, for our edification, permits the conduct of this faithless Apostle to be put side by side with that of the humble and pious woman whose touching history we read at the beginning of the Passion.

S. Mary Magdalene pours the ointment upon the feet of Jesus, and wipes them with the hairs of her head. Judas is indignant, and exclaims, "Why was not this ointment sold? To what purpose is this waste?"

The act of the woman, and the words of Judas, reveal to us the characters of each. Mary Magdalene thought only of her love; Judas loved not, and that was his crime. No doubt covetousness was his sin, but it was a covetousness of which the foundation and beginning was hardness of heart towards Jesus Christ. Hatred of Jesus made him covetous, as love makes Mary bountiful; Judas refuses Him the ointment of Mary, but still more he refuses Him his own heart. He calculates the few pieces of money, which were the price of the ointment; but he measures with much more covetousness the affection that he owes to his Master. Oh! how different is Mary! She bestows with liberal hands the ointment on the Saviour's feet, but she pours forth, in still more lavish profusion, her thoughts, her wishes, and her prayers. And say not with Judas that she ought to have sold this precious balsam, and have given the price of it to the poor. Judas,

notwithstanding his fine words, cared little for the misery of the poor ; so the Gospel tells us. But be assured that Mary, bountiful towards Christ, will be so also towards those that suffer. And I like to think that the Saviour multiplied the ointment in the box of this poor woman, as He multiplied the widow's oil ; and that she who had anointed the Divine feet of Jesus Christ found ointment still enough to heal the wounds of the poor.

Thank Heaven, there have ever been in the Church souls like Mary's, and you may know them at once by this sign of special love towards the body of Jesus Christ, towards the Holy Eucharist. It is they whom you will find keeping watch at the doors of our sanctuaries to prepare and adorn them ; it is they who give willingly of their possessions to add one flower to our altars, or one taper to our tabernacles, or one grain of incense to our censers ; it is they who, enraptured with holy affection, consecrate to prayer the best hours of the day and the sweetest hours of the night. It is they, lastly, who see in the poor, no less than in the Eucharist, the sacred Body of their Saviour, and bestow upon them abundant alms.

But if there are Marys in the Church, are there no Judases in the world ? Yes, indeed ; such are they who, without reaching the extremes of this faithless Apostle, justly merit the reproach of being covetous towards Jesus

Christ ; who, while they profess and call themselves Christians, measure out sparingly to Christ a few moments only of the life which they dedicate wholly to pleasure ; who, at the sight of our religious solemnities or the rich ornaments of our temples, never fail to exclaim with Judas, "To what purpose is this waste ?" whose days and nights are absorbed in the business of the world and its temporal interests, and who find fault with the Christian who consecrates a single hour to prayer, and exclaim, "To what purpose is this waste ?" Ah ! believe me, these souls have no love ; and want of love is a disposition opposed to the blessed Eucharist ; they who love not have nothing to do with It. They communicate not at all, or they communicate in sin. Judas communicated in sin.

There are not in the Holy Gospels any more sad or more terrible words than those which speak of the communion of Judas. Scarce had he received the Bread from the Saviour's sacred Hands, when Satan entered into him. O Lord Jesus, when we make a good Communion, it is Thou Who enterest into us with all Thy treasures, with all Thy delights, with Thy immortal hopes, our hearts are filled with Thee, and there is no room for any other. But, on the contrary, when we make a bad Communion, when we become guilty of Thy Body, when we tread under foot Thy Precious Blood, it is no more Thou alone Who enterest into us ;

it is Satan. Our heart becomes the habitation of him who is our enemy and Thine. We think we have received only the God of the Eucharist to affront Him, but it is Satan whom we have received to take vengeance on our affronts.

Surely it is not without reason that the first bad Communion is presented to our eyes as the prelude to the most horrible crimes.

Jesus Christ in the Eucharist has gone to the furthest limits of His love, and we cannot offend Him in this mystery without reaching the furthest limits of ingratitude. See how one sin leads to another! The kiss of the unworthy Communion of Judas precedes by very little the kiss of treason.

The Apostle trod under foot the Blood of Jesus Christ in the Upper Chamber; now he proceeds to betray Him for thirty pieces of silver. And when remorse began to rend his heart, that heart, which one bad Communion had branded, has no vestige of love left, of that love which is needful for a true repentance. Mary was a sinner; but He has forgiven her much, because she loved much. Judas loves not, and he dies impenitent.

O Eucharistic Deity of Love, I will tarry no longer before this remembrance of treason and crime. Rather at the foot of Thy Altar would I meditate upon sweeter thoughts. Rather would I muse over souls whom Thou cherishest, the virtues with which Thou inspirlest them, the

happiness which they taste in Thy Presence. I will pass on now to such a Communion as I would wish always to make, the Communion of the Apostle John.

John, the son of Zebedee, was one of the first Apostles whom Jesus Christ called. At the first words of the Master, he left all and followed Him. Oh ! how faithfully, how ardently he followed Him ! John is the most complete type of souls that are penetrated with the true spirit of Christ, and reproduce in themselves in the fullest manner the features of the Saviour's life.

Tradition records that John attached himself at an early age to Christ, so that at the decline of life, and when he had reached old age, he could say with the prophet, "It is good for a man to have borne the yoke even from his youth." The yoke he bore was that of which his Divine Master had said unto him, "Take My yoke upon you, for My yoke is easy and My burden is light."

S. John passed much of his time with the Saviour, and he saw and tasted of His sweetness. S. John conversed frequently with Him, and he found by experience Wisdom viii. 16. that "His conversation bath no bitterness."

But what were the qualities which attached the Master so strongly to the disciple ? "Man," says the pious author of the *Imitation of*

Christ, "raises himself to God on two wings, viz., simplicity and purity."

S. John was both simple and pure. Before raising himself as an eagle, he had these two wings of the dove, to fly to his Divine Master, and to rest and repose there.

Simple as a dove, he penetrates the depths of God. Pure as virgins and angels, he has the Divine King for a Friend, and alone among men he merits to be called by this Divine title, "The disciple whom Jesus loved." His Gospel, more sublime and more deep than the other three, rises to the loftiest heights of the Divine Generation, and descends to the most touching details of the conversation of Jesus with the woman of Samaria ; and his admirable Epistles breathe forth in every line his love towards Jesus Christ.

S. John is the Apostle both of the sublimity and of the abasement of the Word. He is the Apostle of the Eucharist. Let us follow him to the Feast of the Upper Chamber.

Amidst the most exalted favours of the tenderness of Christ, is there one that can be compared with that of which S. John was the object? He leans his head on the bosom of Jesus. Let us pause at these words. They point out, in the first place, most clearly the place which S. John occupied in the Upper Chamber. He was reposing upon the bosom of Jesus. Some days before, the mother of

this disciple had asked of the Divine Saviour, for him and for S. James his brother, that He would give unto them to sit the one on His right hand and the other on His left in His kingdom ; and Jesus had replied to the two sons of Zebedee, " Can ye drink of the cup that I shall drink of ? " Ah ! Lord, it is here that S. John prepared to drink of the first cup and the sweetest that Thou offerest him, that of the Holy Eucharist. And Thou, forestalling the desire of his mother, placed him already at Thy side, not yet indeed in the majesty of Thy Kingdom, but in the wonderful manifestation of Thy power.

S. John reclines on Jesu's bosom. O John, thou didst mount up to Tabor, and there thou didst assist at the magnificent spectacle of the Transfiguration. The countenance of Jesus appeared to thee to shine like the sun, and His raiment was as white as snow ; and thou, enraptured at the sight, didst say with the Apostle S. Peter, " It is good for us to be here." O John, the intimacy of the Upper Chamber had not the splendour of Mount Tabor, nor did the countenance of Jesus shine with any other brilliancy than that of unspeakable goodness ; and yet when His lips pronounced in the Upper Chamber the words of the Eucharist, and when thy face, bending forward for the better contemplation of this mystery rested on His Divine Heart, O John, wert thou not inflamed

with a more glowing fire than on the holy mount, and wert thou not more enraptured by this spectacle of love than thou wert by the magnificence of the glory? Didst thou not then, for the second time, repeat the words of S. Peter, "It is good for us to be here"?

John reclines on Jesus' bosom. Oh, my Saviour! Where better can one repose oneself than on Thine Heart? And why accordest Thou this signal favour to one only? John is not more weary than I am; I would recline like him. I live in the midst of the world, and the world wearies me. I strive with my passions, and this strife wearies me. I pursue the phantoms that men call pleasures, and honours, and riches, and this pursuit wearies me. Where shall I recline? O my Saviour! The foxes have holes and the birds of the air have nests. Thy Divine Heart is my alone repose. Suffer my head to recline like that of S. John.

But the Gospel, in giving us these details about the place which S. John occupied in the Upper Chamber, presents to us at the same time one of the truest and completest pictures of a good Communion.

When we receive Jesus Christ in the Eucharist, what is the thought which first comes into our hearts and gives us joy but that of a perfect union between ourselves and Divine Love? The union of strength with weakness, of might with misery, of imperfection with

sanctity ; where the strength sustains the weakness, where the might relieves the misery, where the sanctity corrects the imperfection. And as we cannot imagine any help sweeter or stronger than the heart of a friend, we say willingly in each of our Communions, that we resemble S. John in the Upper Chamber.

But the more fervent the Communion of John is, the more we expect to see it producing admirable results.

Jesus quits the Upper Chamber to betake Himself to Calvary. To the delights of the Upper Chamber He had admitted all the Apostles, and certainly He had good right to hope that they would follow Him in the anguish of His Passion. Alas ! one of the Twelve betrays Him ! another denies Him thrice ; all forsook Him and fled ; He finds only one of them at Calvary, and that was the same who was nearest to Him at the Eucharistic Feast, the Apostle S. John. He stands at the foot of the Cross, and Mary is with him, for Mary is also united to him. She is worthy to embrace the Cross of the Saviour, because she was worthy to bear for nine months the Incarnate Word. John is worthy to lean his head against the Cross, because he leaned with confidence on his Master's Bosom in the Upper Chamber.

Here is a great lesson for Christians. That eminent knowledge of the Cross, of which S. Paul speaks, which alone teaches us to support

sufferings, to accomplish hard duties, to practise difficult virtues, to renounce ourselves wholly,—this knowledge has, for its principle, intimate union with Jesus Christ, and is better learned nowhere than in the Upper Chamber, at the Holy Table, in the School of the Eucharist. The Eucharist teaches love, and love is stronger than death. It were rash to encounter suffering without the Communion ; but it were ungrateful towards the Communion to be without sufferings.

The first fruit that the faithful disciple gathers from a good Communion is the love of the Cross. The second is assuredly that beautiful title which Jesus Christ conferred from the top of the Cross, that of "Child of Mary." "Son, behold thy mother." Assuredly all Christian people claim that precious name, and where is the faithful soul that does not recognize its right to call Mary Mother?

Thus the Communion of the Upper Chamber led the faithful Apostle both to the love of the Cross, and to filial tenderness for Mary ; and his life henceforth may be summed up in these three devotions,—the devotion of the Eucharist, the devotion of the Passion, and the devotion of Mary.

O Lord Jesus, what a beautiful example ! Who will grant me to imitate it ? Ah ! these three cherished devotions, which were the life and the happiness of S. John, shall equally be

mine. And shall they not be as easy to me as to him? I can often sit down at the Eucharistic Table, as John at the feast of the Upper Chamber. The Cross of Calvary is never out of my reach, and I can embrace it like S. John ; Mary is also my mother, and she will adopt me for her son, if I love her always as John loved her.

O Holy Eucharist, nourish me with the Bread which giveth Heavenly Life ! O Cross of my Saviour, merit for me the Heavenly Crown !





## The Ingratitude of Man towards Jesus Christ in the Eucharist.

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### FIRST INGRATITUDE.

*The Neglect of Catholics to Visit Jesus in the Eucharist.*

**W**HEN unbelievers insult the Saviour in His Sacrament they are much to be blamed, and yet they are not without excuse, inasmuch as they believe not. But it is not so with Catholics. When the Jew or the heretic, in their blindness and ignorance, despise the adorable Eucharist, whose unspeakable sweetness they have never tasted, Jesus undoubtedly is troubled at the sight; but what a far more horrible and monstrous impiety is it that the Catholic, who has obtained his knowledge of the truth and the Eucharist from the Church's sources, should insult and despise It!

What excuse is there for all the ingratitude of Catholics towards their Sovereign Monarch in the Sacrament of the Altar? What can be more

frightful than the solitude and desertion in which they leave Him? Go into His churches, and you will find them deserted, while crowds occupy the squares, the streets, and the theatres. The days are too short and the nights not long enough for the exhibitions, the games, the dances, the festivities; time fails for the affairs of this world. But who dwells in the presence of Jesus in the Eucharist, at the foot of His Holy Tabernacles? Who spends an hour, only one hour, before the Sovereign King to Whom a thousand years are but as yesterday? The weeks pass away; and at the utmost at the end of each we assist at a Mass with a thousand distractions. Men flee from the presence of the Saviour as one who has weak eyes flees from the light. They separate themselves from Him; and yet they know that the members that are furthest from the heart partake least of its life; that the sap flows less abundantly in the branches which are furthest from the root; that the stars move in their orbits with less rapidity the further they are from the centre. But is not the Divine Eucharist the centre of the soul, the life of the heart, the root of grace? And let them not excuse themselves by the numerosness or importance of their business. I would ask them whether the affairs of the government hindered Henry II., the Emperor of Germany, from passing several hours every day in the presence of the Eucharist. I would remind

them of Wenceslas, King of Bohemia, who found time to visit the Churches and to pass whole nights before the Altar; or of Xavier, who Christianized twenty-four empires, baptized with his own hands twelve hundred thousand persons, and whose zeal for the Eucharist rivalled that of the angels in God's presence; or of Madeleine of Pazzi, who visited her Divine Love thirty times a day. But where at the present day shall we find such worshippers as those who for whole years had for their only bed and even for their death-bed the steps of the Altar? If we could see the heavenly host we should find them night and day surrounding the Divine Eucharist in adoration; and yet it was not for the angels who adore it that it was instituted; it was for men, ungrateful men, who desert and forsake it. It is for them, and not for the angels, that Jesus Christ dwells in the tabernacle, and it is the angels who come with their numberless choirs to surround Him and do Him homage. Men sail from east to west, and abandon themselves to the caprices of the winds and waves, to run after a metal which fortune denies them. But for the Bread of Life which is to be found everywhere, alas! it is not so. Might we not write above the Altars of our Temples the sad inscription which S. Paul read over that at Athens, To the Unknown God!

For men know not the God of the Eucharist.

Is it in fact to know Him, to go when the law requires it without devotion, on festival days, to one Mass, which we always find too long ? Is it to believe the Divine Sacrament of the Altar to come in a manner unwillingly into His adorable Presence, and there be thinking only of the time when we may return to the amusements and pleasures of the world ? Yes, Jesus in the Eucharist is an unknown God upon earth. O deplorable blindness ! Does the sick man fly from the presence of the physician ? Does the parched soil shun the limpid stream ? And yet men, poor sick creatures, wounded and dying of thirst, plunge into the fire of their passions, and scorn the fount of living water which flows for them from this ineffable Sacrament.

O my beloved brethren, what are you doing ? Return then from your follies. Jesus in His tabernacle is ready to receive you ; He is waiting for you. The doors of His sanctuary groan in their solitude. Why will you not come to Him ? Does not everything tend naturally towards its centre ? The stone that is thrown into the air falls again to the earth ; the needle turns constantly to the pole ; the flame ceases not to aspire towards the heavens. Quit the vain amusements of the world ; shut your ears to the deceitful songs of the syrens ; and go and quench your thirst at the limpid streams of Heshbon, that you have deserted for the troubled waters of Babylon. Let the steps of the Holy

Altar be your dwelling-place ; on the stones that are watered with the sweet waves of the oil of the Eucharist you will find a sleep sounder and more delightful than that of Jacob.

### THE SECOND INGRATITUDE.

#### *Carelessness in furnishing things necessary for the Worship of the Eucharist.*

Unless I had myself had proof, in one part of the Christian world, of this ingratitude towards the Divine Saviour in the Eucharist, I could not have believed it. I cannot understand such carelessness or such avarice among men enlightened with the light of faith, when the Body and Blood of that God are concerned Who heaps His benefits upon them here below, and enriches them with all the treasures of His Glory. On the Altar He opens to them His Heart burning with Love, in order that they may quench their thirst, and come to the source of everlasting life ; and they, insensible to the destitution to which His love has reduced Him, close both their hearts and their purses ; they make not the slightest sacrifice for His dwelling-place ; they leave His temples in want of the commonest and most necessary things. One often looks in vain for linen to cover the altar, or a lamp to burn before the sanctuary. Do we not see Catholics throwing away their money on the embellishment of their houses, the decora-

tion of their rooms, the luxuries of the table? And the altars fall to ruins, the churches crumble away, the tabernacles are bare and naked. Ungrateful men! they forget that the God of the Eucharist is the same God Who causes the sun to shine, and pours the fertilizing rains upon their fields; the same Who traces out the course of the streams that irrigate and fructify them; the same Who peoples the sea and the air with the birds and the fishes that cover their tables; the same Who ripens their harvest and enriches their tables with delicious fruits. One has heard of lions and tigers recognizing the benefits they have received. Man is alone ungrateful, and the more ungrateful the more that is given him. He receives the Blood of the Saviour, he is nourished by His Flesh, and he has nothing for a God so liberal and so good.

He is a wicked man who receives a benefit and does not repay it. The saying is a pagan one; for even paganism has bewailed ingratitude. O ye who are disciples of a God of devotedness and love, ye who believe in the infinite blessing of the Eucharist, beware lest ye deserve the name of ingratitude. Give of your superfluities for the worship of that God Who gives Himself to you. Behold the poverty of His temples. Is it becoming that there should be so much gold in your houses, that your furniture should be so costly, your equipages so rich, and that the altars whereon the Son of

God dies each day for you should be so naked and so poor?

S. Theresa cherished poverty ; but she wished to see the sacred vessels made of the richest pearls of the East. Who is there that has been poorer than Jesus, Whose life and death were a prodigy of the love of poverty ? He was born in a stable and died upon a Cross. But in the Last Supper, on the eve of His sacrifice, when He would consecrate the bread and wine to institute the august mystery of our altars, tradition says that He used precious vessels which Christian piety long possessed and religiously preserved. There have been kings and princes who attached the highest value to anything which had touched the Holy Eucharist. The Emperor Constantine thought it not beneath his dignity to carry the materials destined for the construction of a church. S. Wenceslas, King of Bohemia, sowed the corn of which the sacrificial bread was to be made, and himself prepared the wine for the sacrifice. Margaret, Queen of Hungary, thought it an honour on festival days to hold the Communion cloth ; and princes have been known to clean with their own hands the lamps that hung in the holy place. This piety of the great ones of the world is now only matter of history. Let us bewail it, both for the people's sake whose encouragement such examples would be, and above all for their sakes who will have to give account.

THE THIRD INGRATITUDE.

*The Indifference of Christians in Receiving the Sacrament of the Eucharist.*

I never think without profound astonishment on two precepts which God has given to man, one under the law of nature, the other under the law of grace, very different from each other yet equally violated. The one, given in the earthly paradise, forbade man under pain of death to taste the fruit of the tree ; man tasted it. The other, promulgated in the Church, bids him eat the Saviour's Body ; and he does it not. In vain does Jesus from the depths of the tabernacle repeat that His Flesh is the living bread which gives life ; man neglects to go and sit down at His Table. The Scripture, speaking of Absalom, who cut his hair but once a year, says that he was weighed down by the weight of his hair. And so is it but once a year that men cast off the burden of their iniquities to come to the foot of the holy tabernacle. And even that is very often only to escape the anathema with which the Church threatens them.

This Sacrament is our daily bread, says S. Ambrose, and you make it only your yearly bread. Hence doubtless the foundation of the weakness of Christians. Hence the cause of their so easily losing the grace of God, and becoming the servants of Satan instead of being the friends of God. The learned Abbé Rupert

affirms that the angels fell because they were not nourished with the Divine Bread of the Eucharist. It seems to him impossible that if they had enjoyed the favour granted to Christians in these days, they would ever have dreamed of revolting against a God Who loved them so much as to feed them with His own Flesh and Blood.

It follows then that the fall is certain and the abyss inevitable for him who partakes seldom or never of this sacred banquet. It was the belief of the great Constable Nunez Alvarez Pereira, who used to communicate every day, even in the midst of the camp and of the tumult of battle, "If you would see me conquered," he said, "you have only to deprive me of the Holy Eucharist." When it happened one day to S. Catharine of Sienna not to communicate, she fell grievously sick. If we look to the early Church we shall see with what fervour the faithful partook every day of the Divine Mysteries. He who once failed was deemed no longer worthy of the name and character of a Christian. At the sight of so much zeal and love for the Holy Sacrament what will those cold and careless souls say who pass almost their whole life without approaching the Holy Table? What the ungrateful Israelites in the desert said when the manna, the type of the Eucharist, fell from Heaven to nourish them: "Our soul loatheth this light bread."

It is objected that it is not fitting that imperfect and worldly men should so often approach with their lips the heart of Jesus, and receive into their impure souls Him in Whose sight the angels are not spotless. "This," says S. Bernard, "is the language either of palpable ignorance or of disguised ingratitude, for the more ill you are the more do you need the physician." O foolish and ungrateful creature, if darkness surrounds thee, why not seek the light ! It is not respect for the adorable Eucharist, it is ingratitude, it is lukewarmness, it is attachment to the things of the earth, that stays thee, and separates thee from the arms of thy Creator. This is why thou comest not to Him when on the altar He opens to thee His Heart like a tender mother, and desires to nourish thee with His sacred Blood. If thou hadst the love and faith of a S. Chrysostom, thou wouldest say, as he did, that there is no real ill upon earth except to be deprived of the Eucharist. If thou hadst the love and faith of those two Scottish queens, Maria and Catharine, who suffered with joy and constancy banishment, imprisonment, and death, having no consolation or support but the bread of angels, this heavenly food would not find thee so negligent, or so lukewarm.



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